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Salt Seas and Sailormen

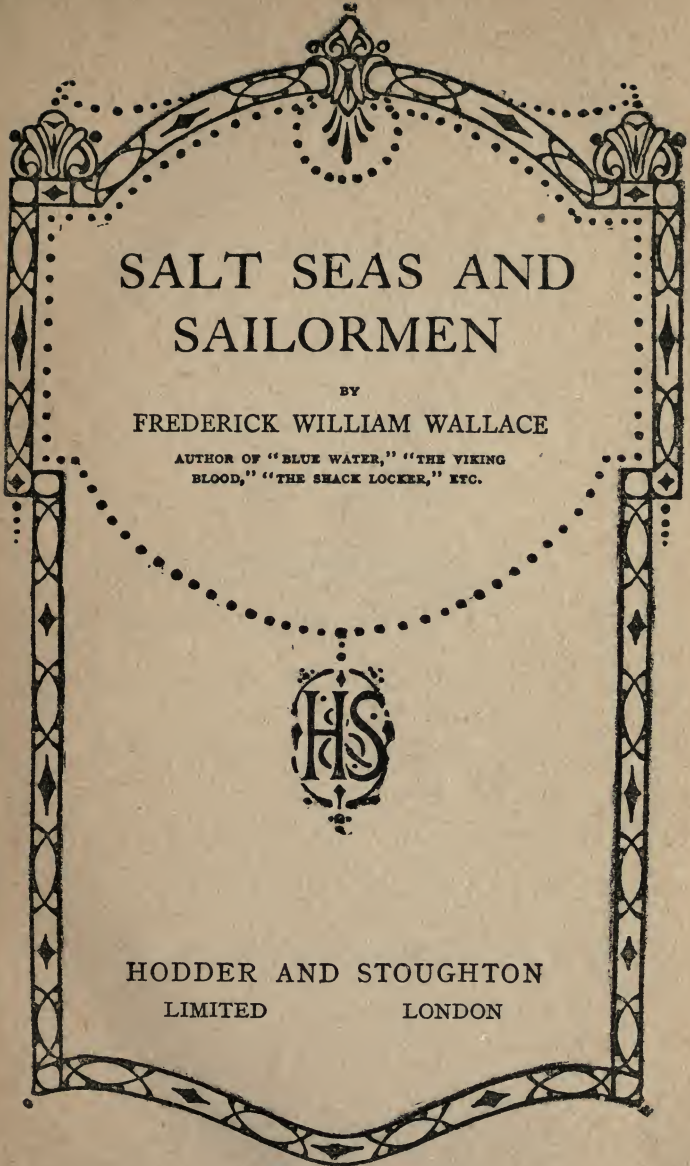
NOVELS BY
FREDERICK WILLIAM
WALLACE

VIKING BLOOD
BLUE WATER
SALT SEAS AND SAILORMEN
THE SHACK LOCKER

ALSO BY THE SAME AUTHOR
WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON
MEN

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

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SALT SEAS AND SAILORMEN

BY
FREDERICK WILLIAM WALLACE

AUTHOR OF "BLUE WATER," "THE VIKING
BLOOD," "THE SHACK LOCKER," ETC.



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I

THE neatly dressed and rather pretty stenographer desisted from her typewriting and listened to the conversation between old John Lovell and Billy Spencer, skipper of the Boston fishing schooner, *Alfarata*. She couldn't help listening. Outside the glass-partitioned private office the dialogue was audible—too interestingly audible for Miss Comstock to carry on her work.

"Sail carrying don't pay the vessel owner!" Old Johnny was shouting in the fashion he had when excited. "Last trip you tore the jib to ribbons and split your fores'l. This time you've broke the main-boom and split the mains'l. You're rim-racking a fine vessel with your sail-dragging——"

"Now, Mr. Lovell," interrupted a soothing voice, "don't take on so. Sure, if you'd ha' been in my place and saw Jack Macpherson in the *Allie Watson* warming her home to Boston under four lowers and me jogging home easylike under Bank sail, you'd have said 'Go to it and trim him!'"

"Humph!" A pause. "And did you trim him?" The anger had vanished from Old Johnny's tones, and there was interest in the question.

"Did we? Well, I sh'd smile!" the other continued. "'Joggin' to Boston this fine day?' says

he as he swings past my lee quarter. 'Yes—joggin',' says I, for I didn't *want* to press her, Mr. Lovell. Then he come back with 'I cal'late you're savin' the *Alfarata's* canvas case Old Johnny gets sore on ye bustin' his sails. Mean as the devil, ain't he?' says he——"

"He said that, did he?" came Lovell's growl.

"Yes, and a lot more, Mr. Lovell," continued the *Alfarata's* skipper. "Now, I wasn't goin' to stand for that, you know, so I hauls the riding sail off her and gives her whole mains'l and jib. It was breezing some with a lumpish sea when I put it to her and 'long about five I had the *Allie Watson* half a mile astern and reefin' his mains'l. That hooker sails well with a tuck in, as maybe you know, but I daresn't stop to reef, but kep' a-coming. It blowed pow'ful hard that night and after we passed the *Araminta Silver* off Boston Lightship lyin-to waiting till it eased up in the bay, a squall hit us and the main-boom broke and the sail split——"

"What did you do then?" Johnny's voice betokened deep interest.

"Had to take it in and sock her along under the riding sail. We made good going and arrived at the Fish Pier this morning at seven with a hundred and twenty thousand of cod and haddock—prime fish. It's noon now, and the *Allie Watson* ain't in yet."

There was a grunt of approval from the vessel owner, and he remarked in a mollified tone: "Well, after hearing the facts of the case, I'll admit you had good reason to press the *Alfarata*. Don't take any sass from Jack Macpherson at any time. You'll need a new boom and the mains'l can be repaired. I'll see to that right away——"

“There’s a few other small items, Mr. Lovell,” came a gentle interposition from Captain Spencer. “Some pen-boards were washed out of the kid; the top of the wheelbox vanished somehow and the patent log broke adrift. The bait-boards disappeared during the night, and the cover of the stays’l box is gone as well. There’s a deck tub missing, and I ain’t sure but what the leech of the jib’s tore. A carpenter’ll fix up the glass what was broke in the cabin skylight, and he can soon knock up a new cable-box——”

There came the grating sound of a chair being shoved back and the smack of a heavy fist on a desk. “Sufferin’ Judas Priest!” shouted Lovell wrathfully. “Don’t tell me any more! I cal’late I’ll go right down and see if the vessel ain’t a hulk and all racked to pieces. Confound it, man, what d’ye think you’re a-doing? Racing for the Fisherman’s Cup?”

“Well, it blowed hard last night and there was some sea in the bay,” came a calm voice in extenuation.

“Blowed hard be hanged!” snapped Old Johnny. “Since you’ve been in that schooner you’ve ripped and tore her all to pieces with your infernal sail-draggin’. You always scare up an excuse to go racing with some joker, and it takes all I make to square up your hell-bent-for-election damages. It’s fishin’ I want the *Alfarata* for—not racing. Get out before I eat you!”

The pretty stenographer bent to her typewriter again as a broad-shouldered, clean-looking young fellow of about twenty-eight came out of the private office. There was the dimple of a suppressed smile in his ruddy cheeks and the hint of almost

boyish enjoyment in his bold grey eyes as he closed the door softly on the fuming occupant of the inner sanctum.

The young woman rose and delved into a mail box. "A registered letter for you, Captain Spencer," she said, handing it over. The young fellow gave the envelope a cursory glance and carelessly thrust the missive into the pocket of his blue-flannel shirt. He took off his cap again and leaned across the counter. "And how's every little thing with you, miss?" he inquired somewhat bashfully, in speech pleasing with the dialect of Nova Scotia.

"Oh, same as usual, captain," answered the girl, placing a pile of accounts into a basket. "Pounding this machine all day and breathing the odour of fish from nine to five. My clothes seem to reek with it."

"Awful smell to stick, ain't it?" observed Captain Billy pleasantly. "And it ain't Floridy water, neither. *He*"—the skipper indicated the private office with a jerk of his head—"must be an awful feller at times, I cal'late, eh?"

The girl laughed. "No, indeed," she replied. "He's very nice and very kind and patient. He never loses his temper with *me*."

The other noted the accented "*me*" and grunted. "Ahem! I reckon you don't give him any cause." Spencer paused and looked rather intently at the young woman seated at the desk sorting papers. He had held pleasant converse with her a good many times between voyages now, and of late her face had often figured in his fancies. But casual conversations upon unimportant topics were unsatisfying, and the more he saw

of Miss Comstock, the more his thoughts were disturbed. As he lounged over the counter regarding her, his keen eyes took in her trim figure, her soft brown hair and appealing features. Her brown eyes seemed to hold a teasing expression when she talked to him, and he felt a sensation of pleasure when she smiled and revealed her white teeth. He was fascinated with her fresh cheerfulness, her intelligence and refined speech, and often wondered and worried if he might be so bold as to make advances toward more intimate acquaintance.

The girl looked up from her work. "You're fond of sailing fast, Captain Spencer," she said teasingly. "I've got a number of accounts here for repairs to the *Alfarata*. None of Mr. Lovell's other schooners seem to have the repair bills that you have."

Billy smiled. "Aye, and none of the other skippers have the fun out of fishing that I have. I wouldn't go a-fishing if I didn't have a bit of a hook with another vessel now and again."

She gave him a keen glance from under her eyelashes and noted the humorous expression in his tanned face. Those bold grey eyes—she was sure he was frightfully daring and reckless—appealed to her and stimulated a desire for friendliness.

A latent intuition as to her attitude spurred Spencer to action. His look met hers, and he took heart and launched into a matter which had occupied his thoughts considerably of late.

"Say, Miss Comstock," he began hesitatingly and with a nervous quiver in his voice. "I—I hope you won't think I'm fresh. I—I don't know any nice girls like you in this town, and oftentimes

I feel I'd like to have one for a pal to go around with when ashore. I'm a rough cuss, I know, and you're a little lady, but—but, would you care to go out to a theatre with me to-night? I—I hope I ain't fresh in asking you?"

The stenographer turned away rather non-plussed. Certainly family reasons decreed that she refuse the invitation, but something was impelling her to accept. She had, for some time past, been compelled to avoid making acquaintances and to repress the age-old desire for the companionship of the other sex. And now an offer of intimate friendship was coming from a young fishing skipper. A cleanly, courteous and fine-looking fisherman, 'tis true; but "What would her mother think of it?"

"How about it, Miss Comstock?" Billy was waiting eagerly for his answer.

"I—I suppose it will be all right," she stammered in confusion. "That is—I—it's very kind of you——"

"Where do you live?" inquired the skipper instantly.

"Number twenty-four Walnut Avenue, apartment ten—near Dudley Street." He wrote the address in his notebook and looked up with pleasure in his eyes.

"I'll be there at half-past seven sharp," he said happily. "Till then, good-bye—and thank you kindly." And the young skipper passed down the stairs and on to the wharf, leaving Miss Comstock a prey to conflicting emotions.

"Whatever made me do it?" she almost wailed. "Just because I was fascinated by his manner and his bold ways I fall for him like—like a cave

woman. I can imagine those fishermen's tastes—a burlesque show, where they smoke and eat peanuts between the acts. Horrors! What will mother say? If he's like some of those other captains, he'll come for me dressed in a loud suit and wearing a howling tie, and he'll have his vest pockets crammed with cigars and be smoking them all the time on the streets. There'll be a huge box of candy—the biggest he can buy—and he'll want to hold my hand after the first act——”

She stopped at the thought of it and continued with grim determination: “If he isn't all right when he calls, I'll plead a headache and refuse to go with him!” And she turned to her work again with many misgivings.

II

Billy Spencer was at his boarding house and seeking advice from his friend Wesley Carson. Wesley was a Bostonian and as a city-dweller was supposed to know the ropes.

“I've asked a young lady to go out with me to-night,” the skipper was saying, “and I don't want to make any breaks. What show will I take her to? What seats will I get? How'll I dress? Should I take her out to supper afterward? Will I call for her in an automobile? Will I——”

“Hold hard, Billy,” cried Carson, with a laugh. “Who's the lady, anyway? One of those Atlantic Avenue dames that pal up with a trawler and his highline roll? Or is it one of the Commonwealth Avenue society set? If it's the former you want to leave your watch and your money at home, and, if it's the latter, you'll need a dress suit with a red tie and tan boots——”

"Quit your foolin', you beach-comber!" growled Spencer, proceeding to divest himself of his sea clothes. "It's little Miss Comstock down to Lovell's office——"

Carson whistled. "Some speed to you!" he observed.

"That's my middle name," said the other. "Speed Spencer, they call me, and I want a little of it from you. Give me a true bill, old man. I don't want to make a mug of myself or her."

"And how did *you* manage it?" asked Carson, with interest. "Half the clerks on the pier have tried to make a date with her and she turns 'em all down. Don't go out with anybody, but keeps to herself. But a mighty nice little girl, too." He paused and thought for a moment and continued: "Now, old-timer, you just leave yourself in my hands. I'll get you orchestra seats at the Colonial. They're playing 'Brewster's Millions' there—which will show you how hard it is to spend money. Put on your blue serge suit and your black shoes——" And Spencer allowed his friend to rig him up and to furnish him with the "course and distance," as seamen say.

"Will I take her anything?" queried the skipper after the orthodox in dress and procedure had been prescribed for him.

"Yes—candy or flowers would be quite in order."

"I'll take flowers," decided Spencer. "Get me some nice ones—roses, I cal'late."

If Mabel Comstock felt nervous before Billy's arrival, her apprehensions vanished when he entered the little Walnut Avenue apartment. Her mental picture of a bold-looking fisherman tricked

out in garb as vari-coloured as the International Code collapsed with the sight of the quietly dressed and handsome young man whom she introduced to her mother.

"I didn't think he would be so neat and nice," she said to herself, as she left the parlour to get her cloak. She buried her face in the exquisite bunch of American Beauty roses which he had brought her and voiced a hope that he wouldn't spoil the evening or her good opinion by a lapse into any of the crudities or vulgarities commonly, and often erroneously, ascribed to fishermen on shore excursions.

Attired in a simple grey crêpe-de-Chine dress which Billy thought made her appear fascinatingly desirable, Miss Comstock slipped on her cloak and kissed her mother. "You won't mind me leaving you for one night, mummy dear?" she asked.

"And I hope you won't mind my asking your daughter to have a little supper after the show if she cares to?" inquired Captain Billy, with an apologetic smile which the mother liked. "It may keep her a little late——"

"That'll be quite all right, Mr. Spencer," answered Mrs. Comstock, regarding her daughter with affection. "I'm *so* glad to see her go out. She's been debarred from many pleasures of late, and it's very kind of you. You'll take good care of her, and I hope you'll enjoy yourselves. I'll see you when you come back."

Spencer had to admit that he was nervous at first. It was an entirely new sensation for him to be nervous with a woman. He had met the sex before, many times, but they were not of Mabel Comstock's type and did not attract him. He was

glad now that his relations with women had always been aboveboard and that he had ever cherished an ideal in those matters.

"I'm an awful bear, Miss Comstock," he observed with characteristic frankness, "and I ain't used to city ways. I hope you'll forgive me if I make any breaks and jest steer me right when I'm heading wrong——"

The girl laughed happily. She liked his boyish candour and felt a certain sense of pride in having this strapping, virile young sailor profess dependence upon her. She knew Spencer by reputation, and had heard fishermen's gossip of his daring and fearlessness. There was also a story of how he tried to ram a German submarine off the Irish coast in a three-masted schooner, and other things. This fisherman admitted his shortcomings in shore ways. Most men would have bluffed and concealed their ignorance. She admired him.

They thoroughly enjoyed the play, and Spencer felt that he missed a lot in life by the existence he had chosen to live. "Jupiter! I'd like to do this sort of thing every night," he murmured to himself. "To-night, I'm here enjoyin' myself in a decent kind of way. To-morrow, this time, we'll be well offshore soakin' the *Alfarata* for Brown's Bank and breathin' coal gas and bilge. Gee! I wish I was rich. I'd never go near the sea or a vessel."

It was while seated at a table in an after-theatre restaurant that Spencer experienced new and pleasurable sensations. There were sweet-scented flowers on the table, and a string orchestra was playing dreamy melodies. Mabel Comstock, with face and eyes glowing under the shaded lights, looked fascinatingly beautiful, and she was asking

him questions about himself. He, delighted at her interest, was talking freely.

“Aye, miss, I was born on a farm up in Nova Scotia, but I never knew much of a home other than a vessel. Mother died afore I really knew her and father married again—a widow with a family—and me and my brother Jim had a hard time with her. I can’t remember much of Jim. He was a big feller of seventeen when I was about four or five, and he skipped out and went to sea. We never h’ard of him again, and I reckon he was drowned.

“I was beat around until I was eleven, when I followed Jim’s lead and ran away to sea on a coaster, helpin’ the cook. Then I went off as a boy on a salt Bank fisherman, and when I was seventeen I went off to see a bit of the world before the mast on a square-rigger. I came back from deep water and fished out of Glo’ster until I was twenty-two. Then I spoke for command of a vessel and got the *Annie Wells*. We made some good trips in her, but I lost her in the big winter’s breeze four years ago. I sure thought I was done for then as I kinder lost her foolishly by drivin’ in on the land when I sh’d ha’ laid her head off-shore and took the breeze hove to. However, I got my nerve together and when I got back to Glo’ster I asked her owner to give me another vessel. I cal’late he was took by my gall, for he gave me the *Jennie Westmacott*. We made some good trips in her, but she was an old toothpick and after she fell apart goin’ out of Rockland one winter, I shipped as mate of a three-master running the war zone to France. I planned to do something over there, but got sent home and——”

"For what?" The girl was intensely interested.

"A busted leg. Piece of shrapnel from a German submarine what sunk the schooner off Ireland. Then I came to Boston, and Johnny Lovell gave me the *Alfarata*. I'm still in her——"

"And from what I heard this morning, Captain Spencer," interrupted the girl with a laugh, "you're doing your best to lose her, too."

Spencer grinned. "Lovell was sure mad, but he doesn't really mind it. He kicks a lot at the damage, but you should hear him braggin' around the pier. Now, don't let me cram you with all this yarn about myself and my business. I'd like to know about you. Your father—is he alive?"

A shadow seemed to cross the girl's face, and she crushed her serviette nervously. "No—no!" she answered falteringly, and her eyes avoided his direct gaze.

"Is there jest you and your mother? No other brothers or sisters?"

"Only us two."

The skipper sipped his coffee and remarked wistfully, "You're lucky to have a mother. Father ain't so hard to do without—at least that's my notion; but a mother—— Golly! I wish I had one. I cal'late we'd have a great time together."

The expression on his face when he spoke awakened a feeling of sympathy in Miss Comstock's heart. A man who longed thus for a mother was all right. She was glad that she had accepted Spencer's invitation and hoped that the friendship thus commenced would continue. She mentally accented the word friendship—at the present time she could not consider any other basis of acquaintance.

Billy drove her home in a taxi, in accordance with Wesley Carson's advice, and felt deliriously happy. He saw her up to the door of her little apartment and was about to take his departure when the girl, glancing at her wrist watch, said: "It's early yet, captain. Won't you come in for a few minutes and say good night to mother?"

With a momentary hesitation as if questioning the propriety of such an invitation, Billy decided it was quite correct and that he was making no "break" in accepting. Besides, he was heels over head in love, and was anxious to see as much of Mabel Comstock as possible ere he sailed for the Banks on the morrow.

She opened the door with her key, and the skipper followed her into the parlour. They had entered very quietly and the roar of a passing elevated train had drowned the sound of their voices. Leading the way to the dining-room, Miss Comstock was about to greet her mother when she stopped suddenly at the door of the room with features bloodless and fearful. The elevated train had passed and Spencer heard a man's voice speaking in the room.

"For God's sake, Mary, think of something," the stranger was saying. "I've got to get out of the country——"

The girl reeled against the door frame and Spencer grabbed her and kept her from falling. He glanced hastily around the room to see what had caused the young woman to act thus and beheld Mrs. Comstock staring at them with terror in her eyes, while behind her stood a roughly dressed, bearded man of about forty-five years of age. The latter's face expressed several emotions

—apprehension and nervous expectancy predominating—and the skipper glanced around the three, uncomprehending.

“What—what the deuce is the matter?” he stammered in perplexity.

Miss Comstock recovered herself and stood for a moment dumbly looking at her mother and the stranger. Her face was still white, and her brown eyes were wide with alarm.

“How—how did you get here?” she inquired faintly—addressing the man with the beard.

The man looked flustered. “I—I just got in a few minutes ago, Mabel,” he said hesitatingly. “Rather unexpected. I—I’m afraid I scared you, dear. I—I couldn’t help it.”

The colour came back to the girl’s face, and her features registered a conflict of feelings. Then yielding to a sudden impulse, she ran to the man and threw her arms around his neck.

“Oh, daddy, daddy!” she cried in an anxious voice. “Is it all right now? Are you coming back to us again?” The other was kissing and caressing her with affection, and the nervous tensivity of his expression relaxed for a space.

Spencer beheld this scene in a state of incomprehensible confusion: “*Daddy!*” she had called him! And about an hour ago she had told him that her father was dead. He was standing as in a daze when the stranger glanced over at Spencer and alarm showed in his eyes.

“Who is that man?” he whispered in some agitation. “Can we trust him? Could he help me? I must do something quickly! They may be on my track even now.”

He withdrew his arm from Mabel’s shoulders

and picked up some money from the table. Mrs. Comstock slipped her arms around his neck, and she was crying. Mabel walked over to where the skipper stood—her eyes mutely imploring—and she spoke tremblingly.

“Captain Spencer! I *know* I can trust you. This is my father. I lied to you this evening because—because—my father was in State’s prison. He has escaped. What shall we—what can we do?” There were tears on her face and piteous appeal in her tone.

“This is a devil of a note,” Billy was thinking, and an overpowering wave of sympathy flooded his heart. Her old man an escaped convict! A criminal! A dickens of a business, in truth! He rapidly recovered his wits with the girl’s bold statement, and the tense supplication on the faces of the three made him feel that they were looking to him for aid and action.

Comstock beckoned the skipper over. The man had a pleasant, good-looking face, but it was lined and careworn. He spoke nervously and cast restless eyes about the apartment, and he appeared to be listening for something.

“I made my get-away three months ago and have been doubling around to get here to see them. Just got in from Florida—firing on a steamer. Can’t stay here, but if I could get across to Mexico or Canada I might get a chance to straighten things out.” The man seemed to hang on Billy’s answer.

“Mexico or Canada?” repeated the skipper. “I don’t know about Mexico, but I might get you into Canada.” He thought for a moment while the others focused him with their gaze. “Let him

come along with me," he said at length with the quick decision of the vessel-master. "I'll go to my room, get my kit, and go down aboard the vessel. He can sail with me to the Banks, and I'll arrange to land him somewheres on the Canadian coast. How's that?"

Mother and daughter flashed him looks of hope and thankfulness, and the father seemed relieved at the suggestion. "We must go now," said Comstock hastily. "Every minute here is dangerous. I'll find a way to let you know where I am, and Mary—Mabel—believe in me. I didn't do it. It was the other man. They made me the scapegoat for the gang." Turning to Spencer, he said, "Captain! You'd better leave right now, and I will meet you on Atlantic Avenue."

The young fisherman was out on the street before he knew it and making for his boarding house with long strides. Pictured indelibly on his memory was the look of unspoken gratitude expressed in Mabel's brown eyes when she accompanied him to the door. She had squeezed his hand warmly, and her last words—"I can't thank you. Look after him. God bless you!"—rang in his ears.

"Juice of a note, this business," he murmured as he swung along. "Fancy, her old man a convict! Ain't that the devil and all? And I'm lettin' myself in for somethin', too, by jingo! Wonder what he was jugged for? Don't look like a crim'nal. Juice of a note, by gum, but I reckon she's worth doin' it for. Yes, and I'd promise any blame kind o' foolishness for her sake, so I would!" And in the midst of his perplexities he smiled happily.

III

Spencer met Comstock at the appointed place. He was wearing his sea clothes and had mapped out a plan of campaign. "You're an old friend of mine," he coached the bearded man, "and you've been sick with the flu. You're takin' a little trip to the Banks to pick up your health. Your name is Tom Brown, remember—Tom Brown of Boston. What was your job afore you were—er—jugged?"

"I was a chemist in a large manufacturing concern."

"You'll need to be careful how you talk aboard a fisherman. The boys are terrors to gossip and if it got known that a chemist went to sea with me, the police might pick it up. What other job can you talk about that won't give you away?"

Comstock thought for a moment. "I've been on railroad survey work and mining——"

"No mining," said Billy decisively. "If the gang thought you was a miner they'd immediately think of gold, silver, and diamonds and be wantin' to know all about mining to see if there was more money in it than goin' a-fishin'. They'd be pumpin' you all day long. I reckon you'd better be a railroad man—a track boss. Shovellin' dirt ain't likely to appeal to a fisherman, and they won't ask you many questions on that kind of work. That's the story for the present. Now, I'll roust into this outfitter and buy you a few clothes. You wait here."

It was after midnight when Billy and Comstock jumped down aboard the *Alfarata*. The fish was out, ice and stores aboard, and the new boom was in the saddle with the sail laced to it. Spencer

noted these facts with pleasure. He led the way down into the schooner's cabin where three fishermen sat playing cards on the lockers. They looked up when the skipper entered and favoured Comstock with curious glances.

"A friend of mine—Tom Brown," vouchsafed Billy. "He's been sick with the flu and ain't able to go back to work yet a while. He's a-comin' with us as a bit of a holiday."

He turned to Comstock. "There's a spare bunk over to starb'd there, Tom. Jest chuck your dunnage in there and make yourself to home. We don't stand on ceremony on a fisherman. Eat and sleep whenever you have a mind to and don't wait to be introduced."

"Th' flu's a mighty weakenin' thing, ain't it, mister?" observed one of the men, addressing Comstock. "And a little trip like this'll fix ye up good." "Tom Brown" was soon engaged in pleasant conversation and endeavouring to act the part of a convalescent.

"Are all the boys aboard?" asked Spencer.

"All but Alec McDonald, I guess, and he jest went up the head of the wharf."

"Half shot I s'pose?" growled the other. He went over and tapped the barometer, and the needle prophesied fair weather. With Comstock aboard, Billy wanted to get away to sea immediately, and he mentally cursed Alec McDonald for his nocturnal ramblings. He looked up the cabin hatch and noted that the wind was fresh and westerly—a good night for a shove-off. "We'll get under way, I reckon, and take advantage of this fine breeze," he said. "Call the crowd and get yer mains'l up."

The *Alfarata's* gang were used to their skipper's whims. Spencer was no time waster. He made quick trips and good money for his men, and "Speedy" Spencer was almost a proverb on the Banks. To Comstock he said meaningly: "Better turn in, Tom. You might not get much sleep if it's rough outside and you must remember you ain't a well man. Rest is what you need."

The crowd had the mains'l up and the stops were off fores'l and jumbo when McDonald staggered down the wharf accompanied by another man. They stood on the edge of the pier talking, and Spencer could hear the stranger asking questions—odd questions, and Billy was apprehensive.

"Come aboard now, Alec!" bawled the skipper quickly. "We can't wait all night for you!"

The other held McDonald by the arm, detaining him. "Who's that?" he asked.

"Thash th' skipper," replied the fisherman. "Thash ol' Speedy Shpensher. Great feller's Sheedy Pensher. I mush go, ol' feller, mush go!"

"Carrying any passengers this trip?"

Billy heard the query and trembled. "Away ye go'n yer fores'l!" he bawled. "Leggo for'ad! Come aboard, you Mac, or I'll leave you!"

McDonald endeavoured to shake off the other's detaining hand. "Any strangers going out with you this time?"

The foresail was going up and the schooner's bow was sheering off from the wharf, and Billy was slacking off the stern line—the bight of which was around a spile.

"Let my man go, you wharf-rat!" roared Spencer excitedly. "D'ye want him to miss the vessel?"

“ Yesh, you bum, lemme go ! ” protested Mac, as he endeavoured to break away.

“ Any passengers or strangers——”

The foresail was up and the jumbo was screeching on the forestay. The schooner was moving away from the wharf when Spencer leaped up on the dock, gave the stranger a tremendous buffet on the side of the head which knocked him flat on his back, and almost hove McDonald down on the *Alfarata's* deck. Then he leaped the intervening six feet between wharf and rail and spun the wheel over. The *Alfarata's* main-boom swung out as Billy deftly cast the sheet off the bitts, and he glanced back in the darkness to see the man he had struck rising to his feet and brushing the mud off his clothes.

“ A damned 'tec, I'll swear ! ” gasped Billy to himself. “ Must have traced Comstock down here.” Of the reeling McDonald, he inquired sharply : “ Where did you pick that feller up, and what did he want ? ”

The fisherman commenced a rambling story of how he had met the stranger at the head of the dock and how he had commenced asking him a lot of questions as to whether the skipper was aboard and if he had a friend with him.

“ I told th' swab that you was aboard and that you had no friends with you. 'N' even ef you had a friend with you it was none of his damned bishiness.”

When clear of the dock, Spencer ordered the light sails set, and he steered the schooner down the harbour himself. Comstock, in his bunk, knew nothing of the episode on the dock, as, completely tired out, he had fallen asleep a few minutes after

turning in, and when he awoke at five, it was to hear the rush of water outside the schooner's planking and Spencer's voice singing out: "Aft here, fellers, and sheet in yer mains'l!"

With a sigh of profound relief, the man lay with eyes closed while his nerves, keyed to high tension with the fear of detection and arrest, relaxed gratefully, and the harsh lines of strain and worry faded from his bearded face. He had lived an eternity in the last three months, and, as he lay calmly reflecting, he shivered involuntarily at the memory of the two years he had served in prison; his break-away from the labour gang in the early morning mist and the whine of the warder's bullets. Then came the riding of freight trains, tramping the roads, begging and working at odd jobs, but always moving on. Three months of anxious freedom and he was in Fernandina when an overwhelming desire to see his wife and daughter possessed him, and he came to Boston as coal trimmer in a tramp steamer. He had seen them and—"God! If I could only prove it and be cleared," he murmured fearfully. "But I can't—I can't. Ten years! I couldn't stick it out. But let me get to Canada and I'll have a chance to start a new life and get my people with me—out in the West where they don't ask questions."

Spencer gave him a hail at seven. "Breakfast, Tom! We're forty mile outside now and runnin' to the east'ard like a hound. A day like this'll shake the last flu germ out of you. Come along for'ard and get some grub inside you."

The *Alfarata*, under all sail, was logging nine knots and riding easily over the swells. Comstock glanced around the sunlit waters and aloft at the

white canvas, and to Spencer he said softly: "Man, but it's wonderful; it's great to be out here—free and away from the dread of a hand on your shoulder—you know what I mean." He straightened up and drew the keen sea air into his lungs and favoured Billy with an almost affectionate scrutiny. "I don't know how I—we Comstocks—can thank you for what you've done. If I can make it and get clear, I'll be in your debt for life." And he furtively pressed the young skipper's hand.

They reached the Bank in twenty-eight hours and prepared for fishing. Comstock, acting the part of a convalescent, lolled around the deck.

"Don't you lay a hand to a thing," warned Spencer. "You're a pretty husky lookin' feller to have gotten over a dose of flu and if you go pullin' and haulin' around, the boys'll smell a rat."

During the long summer days the dories went over the side at daybreak and the fishermen set and hauled their trawls until sundown. Billy Spencer was as hard a fisherman as he was a vessel driver and he kept himself and all hands busy until after they had dressed the fish of an evening and stowed them in crushed ice below. And while he was running the schooner around the Bank, keeping track of dories and fish, he was doing some tall thinking as to how he would land his passenger on the Canadian coast without awakening the suspicions of the men. The incident on the dock at Boston was disturbing him greatly.

"It ain't as easy as it looks," he confided to Comstock. "You've got to dodge the immigration people, and I've got to have an excuse for running in." Then noticing the worried expression on the

other's face he added hastily: "But don't you worry. There's more ways of armin' a lead than by usin' soap. I'll slip you ashore all serene, and you'll have no difficulty in getting out to western Canada. You make for Halifax or Sint John and you can easy get to Montreal and the West if you have the price." They talked over ways and means and had decided on a plan to land Comstock near Yarmouth, when events took a new and unforeseen turn.

They were on the eastern edge of the Bank when a square-rigger hove into their range of vision. Square-riggers, though not common nowadays, call for no unusual comment from fishermen, but this one attracted Spencer's attention by the way she acted.

The weather was fine with a fresh breeze and the sailing ship should have been hull down and out of sight within a few hours. But they raised her upper sails in the flush of the dawn and she was in sight throughout the day. At sundown she appeared to be hove to. Next morning, daylight revealed her close aboard and standing toward the *Alfarata*. The fishermen were just through with breakfast and getting ready to swing the dories over, and they knocked off to watch the stranger with many surmises.

The ship—a finely modelled three-master with double topgallantsails on fore and main—came rolling toward them under reduced sail. When within a cable's length of the fishing schooner, her mainyards were swung aback and she lay hove to while two signal flags ran up to her mizzen-gaff.

"A two-flag hoist," ejaculated Spencer. "Urgent signal. Looks like N. C. 'In distress,' if I

remember rightly." He sang out to the wondering fishermen: "Swing a dory over, boys, and see what he wants."

Dories from port and starboard nests were swung up and out, and as they splashed into the sea, curiosity-impelled men leaped over the rail into them.

"Hold on there!" bawled the skipper. "No need for all hands to go. He ain't invitin' you aboard to have a drink, I cal'late. You, John Watson, and you, Tom Westhaver, go and see what he wants and don't be all day about it." As an afterthought, he turned to Comstock. "Go over with them, Tom, if you like. She looks a foreigner of some kind and maybe you can bring me back a straighter message than our fellows."

The other hesitated for a moment as though dreading the venture, then he laughed and slid over the side into the waiting dory.

Within thirty minutes they were pulling back. As soon as the dory came alongside the schooner, Comstock, with surprising agility for a supposed convalescent, sprang over the rail and approached Spencer. In his eyes there were signs of suppressed agitation.

Aloud he said: "They say their captain and mate were washed overboard in a storm, and they want someone to navigate the ship in to New York——" He gripped Billy by the arm and drew him away from the surrounding fishermen. The skipper winced under Comstock's fingers—the man was labouring under high excitement, and he whispered hoarsely: "And *Jimmy the Red's* aboard her!"

"Jimmy the who?" ejaculated Spencer won-

deringly, and Comstock's squeezing fingers on his arm checked his further utterance.

"For God's sake, Spencer, come below a minute," urged the other compellingly. "Get away from these listening men, and I'll tell you something."

The skipper clattered down into the cabin, followed by Comstock. The apartment was untenanted. "What the devil's the matter?" asked Billy softly. "You look as if you'd seen a ghost——"

Comstock was terribly wrought up and trembled visibly. Spencer was alarmed at the man's excitement. "Not a ghost, Spencer," replied the other in a portentous voice, "but the one man in all this wide world that I must get the hold of! The man who was the cause of my imprisonment! The man who threw me to the wolves——"

"Where? Who is he? Quick, man!"

"Aboard that ship over there! He's among the crew. I saw him—talked with him—Jan Kowalsky—Jimmy the Red—and the man who did the job I was railroaded into the penitentiary for!"

"The devil ye say!"

Comstock continued in a rapid whisper, and the perspiration of agitation moistened his forehead. "I was given ten years' hard labour for a bombing affair. I was accused and convicted of blowing up the plant of the Plenzer Iron Works in Delancey, Pennsylvania. I was, to my eternal regret, mixing around with a crowd of so-called socialists and I.W.W.'s at the time, and while I knew of the plans for destroying the Plenzer plant, yet I honestly had no hand in it. This Kowalsky—the man aboard that ship there—was the one who

actually did the job, and he managed to throw the blame on me. He was never suspected. I was sentenced." He paused and wiped his face.

"Well," said Spencer slowly, "what can we do about it? D'ye want me to get the gang and drag him off that hooker?"

"No, that would never do," answered Comstock a trifle more composed, "Kowalsky can't be handled that way. I can only suggest one thing just at present, and that is for you to go aboard that ship and navigate her into port. I'll go with you and make sure that Kowalsky doesn't get away. I'll find a way to make him confess to the Plenzer affair——"

The other's face was expressionless, and Comstock noted it and endeavoured to imbue him with the importance of the matter. "I have this chance, Spencer, and I *must* keep my eye on him. God, boy, but you don't know—you can't realize—what I've suffered and how I'm hungering to join my wife and daughter as an honest man and a free man. It's a terrible thing—a horrible thing—to be deprived of your liberty; to know that the law requires ten years of your life. And it's worse to be like I am now—an escaped convict—flying from the law and always living in fear of detection. There is the hand of God in this thing, Spencer. He's giving me a chance to prove my innocence. You've done a tremendous lot for me already, Spencer, but for God's sake help me now and I'll make it up to you in some way." He waited in an agony of suspense for the young skipper's decision.

"All right! I'll go!" said Billy at last. The intense supplication in the man's voice and face

impressed him and the thought of doing something for Mabel Comstock urged him to tackle the job. One of the boys, Juddy Moore, could take the *Alfarata* home to Boston and explain things to Johnny Lovell. He, Spencer, would navigate the ship to Boston and arrive there in time to take the *Alfarata* out again.

Spencer threw some necessary articles of clothing into a bag and secured his sextant, his nautical tables and almanac. "We'll skip along now," he said. "Got your duds, Brown? Good!" Comstock led the way up on deck while Spencer gave a final look around. "Lemme see!" he murmured. "Have I got my pipe and tobacco!" He made a hasty survey of his pockets and when thrusting his hand into that of his flannel shirt he felt the crackle of paper therein. He was about to go ahead when recollection came to him. "Gorry! That must be the letter Miss Comstock gave me in Lovell's office, and I ain't opened it yet. M'm! Must be in love, I cal'late, to be so forgetful."

He hastily tore it open and read the typewritten contents. "Sufferin' codfish!" he ejaculated in amazement as he slumped down on a locker to read the missive again.

"DEAR SIR,—We have reason to believe that you are the only surviving brother of the late James Winslow Spencer, who died in Seattle, Washington, on August 9th, 19—.

"Mr. Spencer, who was a resident of Victoria, B.C., left a considerable amount of property and, under the terms of his will, this is to be divided among certain charities one year exactly from the hour and date of his demise, provided no claim was

made by his brother William Ainslie Spencer. The late James Spencer was a rather peculiar man, unmarried, and extremely reticent as to his family and connections. He boasted that he had no relations and didn't want any. He died suddenly and a search through his personal papers failed to reveal anything regarding him, his birthplace, or from whence he came.

"The writer was somewhat intimate with him and we took this matter up on the chance that an heir might be found. We traced the late Mr. Spencer's career back to where he shipped as a seaman from New York to San Francisco on an American barque. On her articles he signed as hailing from Anchorville, Nova Scotia. Inquiries made by us there elicited the information that you were his only brother.

"The object of the present is to urge you to come out to Victoria immediately—bringing such identification records as you may have. It will be necessary for you to be at our office before August 9th, otherwise the estate of your brother will go to the charities mentioned if no claim is made before noon of that date.

"We will be obliged if you will wire us immediately on receipt of this letter and trusting that our interest will have found favour with you, we remain, yours very truly,

"MCGRAW, HISCOCK & DELORO.

"Barristers and Notaries, Victoria, B.C."

"Sufferin' codfish!" he reiterated—his wits knocked galley-west. "August ninth—and this is August second! If I was to slam the *Alfarata* for Boston right away, I'd make it easy, but on that

big clumsy ballyhoo to wind'ard there——” He paused in disturbed and tantalizing hesitancy and thought of Comstock, “Jimmy the Red,” and Mabel. “Lord Harry! What sh’d I do?” he asked himself in considerable mental disquietude. It was indeed a momentous problem, and it seemed as though Fate were placing the two alternatives before him and saying, “Choose!” Comstock, impatiently waiting and absorbed with his own affair, little knew of the tremendous struggle which was taking place in Spencer’s mind.

“If I got that money I’d be fixed for life and could get away from this drudgery, and I c’d maybe corral Mabel at the same time. But then her dad would still be a wanted man, and she’d never be happy. On the other hand, I might go on that windbag on the chance of squeezin’ the truth out of that Kowalsky joker, and Comstock may have made a mistake, and it mayn’t be the man after all. I’d lose everything then.” He paused and reflected. “He seemed pretty certain,” he murmured, “and I’d like to see that shadow lifted from him and her. Gorrry! I wish I knew what was best.”

He drew a coin from his pocket. “Heads—I go on the windbag. Tails—I slam the *Alfarata* for Boston and hike for the property!” He tossed the coin up, and it came down—tails——! A vision of Mabel Comstock’s appealing face rose before his eyes, and her last words rang in his ears, “Look after him—and God bless you!”

With a new-found determination pictured on his bronzed face, Billy thrust the letter into his pocket again and took a fresh grip of his gear. He threw the coin into the stove, saying whimsically,

"You're a dam' liar, Mister Penny. I ain't a-goin' to do what you think. For her sake, by Godfrey, I'll do the other thing and take a chance!"

Twenty minutes later, he and Comstock clambered up the Jacob's ladder of the full-rigged ship *Gregory*, of Riga.

IV

A red-haired man of medium height and sinewy build met them at the rail. He had a colourless face with high cheekbones and prominent jaw—the muscles of which bulged visibly—and his mouth reposed in a determined line. He was of that "sandy-complexioned" type upon which one scarce bestows a second glance, and his age would be anywhere between thirty-five and forty-five.

"My name is Smith," he volunteered glibly. "I'm the stoo'ard of this ship. The captain and mate were washed over the side by a sea that boarded the poop four days ago, and our second mate don't understand navigation——"

Spencer's eyebrows went up in surprise. "Four days ago?" he exclaimed. "Whereabouts were you then?"

The red-haired steward waved his hand vaguely. "Somewheres to the east'ard, sir. We're bound from Glasgow to New York, sir."

Spencer thought it strange. For the past ten days, Atlantic weather had been smooth and summery with light southerly and westerly winds. There was neither swell nor cloud to evidence any such weather as would poop a big ship like the *Gregory*. Billy looked hard at the man and instantly became aware that he was not the non-

entity he appeared at first glance. The puttylike face was enlivened by close-set eyes of an indescribable hue. Like the man's complexion, they were tawny and cat-like, and the pupils appeared to contract and expand with the fellow's emotions. The skipper noticed that they were contracted now, and this peculiarity had caused the change in the steward's expression which commanded Spencer's attention.

"Yes, sir, it was very strange," the steward continued, his face stolid, but the eyes narrowed to pin-point pupils. He spoke calmly, as though he had sensed the doubt in the other's mind. "Breeze and sea came up all of a suddenlike under a cloudless sky. The wave that boarded her, sir, had all the appearance of a tidal wave—a most extraordinary comber. After sweeping the poop, the wind fell flat, and it was all over within an hour. A submarine earthquake possibly, sir."

His speech was that of an educated man in spite of lapses into shipboard idioms. His explanation sounded plausible, and he continued: "And who may I be addressing, sir?"

"My name is Spencer," replied Billy. "I'm skipper of that fishing schooner over there, and I'll take your ship into Boston. I can't take her to New York, as I want to join my vessel again as soon as possible." He turned and indicated Comstock. "This is my mate, Mr. Brown."

The steward favoured Mr. Brown with a searching glance. For a passing moment it seemed as though a startled expression showed in his shifting eyes. The pupils seemed to be absorbed in the tawny iris for a second; then they regained their normal appearance again, and his face became

void of emotion. "Boston will do just as well, sir," he said. "We can get other officers there. If you'll follow me, I'll show you the chart-room."

When Smith, carrying their bundles, clambered up the poop ladder, Spencer allowed his glance to rove around the ship. The crew—the usual crowd of variously garbed nondescripts—were gathered in a mob to one side of the deck, while two men stood on top of an after-deck house and seemed to be furtively watching the others. The crowd at the rail were strangely silent, and there appeared to be an air of sullen indifference in their attitudes and expressions. One man, clad in a soldier's khaki tunic, appeared to be eyeing those on top of the deck-house in passive resentment.

An owl-faced fellow with typical Slavonic features was pacing the poop, and the steward called him over. "Captain Spencer," said Smith, "this is Kimeneff—the second mate. He speaks a little English—enough to understand and give orders—but he can't navigate."

The officer smiled and raised his hat to Spencer's nod, and the latter passed on and entered the chart-room. A chart was spread out on the table, and Billy scrutinized it while Comstock and Smith stood outside.

"What's yer cargo, mister?" asked Comstock, giving his words a "down-East" twang. The steward looked at him sharply. "Case oil, sir," he replied.

"She's a Russian, ain't she?" questioned the other, and added: "Ain't a Bolsheviki Russian, is she?"

The steward laughed—a metallic cackle which grated on the ear.

"Hardly, sir. She's of the Republican side—the anti-Bolshevik—with no home port. She hasn't been in Riga since the revolution. Her owners are living in France, I believe. Our unfortunate captain was part owner of the ship——" He paused and called to the second mate. "Vassili Ivanovitch!"—addressing him in the Russian manner—"Tell those fellows on the house there that the stays'l is all right now. They're only loafing." Comstock, watching him furtively, noticed the meaning glint in his eyes when he spoke.

He turned and smiled. "Though I'm the steward of this ship, yet I've practically had to take charge of her since the officers went. Kimeneff is a clod—a stupid ass!"

Spencer had been doing some figuring on the chart, and he looked up.

"Does the crew understand English? Are they all Russians?" he asked.

"Most understand English, sir," replied the steward. "They're all nationalities, but English is the ship's language."

Billy walked aft to the steering compass. A man was at the wheel, lolling over the spokes. "Let 'er go west b' north when I get her braced around," he said, and the man promptly reiterated "Vest by nort', sir, ven she's braced around!" in an accent betraying the Scandinavian. Striding to the poop-break, Spencer sung out for the bos'n, and one of the men who had been standing on top of the deck-house came aft.

"Swing yer main-yards and take a pull on yer lee braces. We'll brace her up on the port tack. And, bos'n, get some more sail on her. You can

give her t'gan's'ls and royals and the mizzen and maintopm'st stays'ls."

The steward vanished below, and Billy spoke to the lumbering Kimeneff. "I jest told the bos'n to brace her up on the port tack and to set more sail. You'd better tend to the weather braces and see the sails set."

"Yaas, I do so, sir," replied the Russian, and he clattered down the ladder to the main deck.

When he had gone, Spencer turned with studied carelessness to Comstock and asked quietly: "Are you sure of your man? Did he recognize you, d'ye think? It's that there stoo'ard, ain't it?"

"I'm dead sure," replied the other in a vehement undertone. "It's that red-headed steward and he doesn't know me. He didn't see much of me, anyhow, and I've grown this beard and got much thinner."

Billy lit up a cigarette, blew a puff of smoke, and a puzzled expression crossed his features. "D'ye know, Brown; there's something darned fishy about this hooker." He paused and indicated the men working at the forebraces with a jerk of his head. "Those fellers for'ard are pullin' without singin' out. That's a bad sign on a windjammer. When men don't chantey or sing out there's something wrong. They're sulky and sore about something. Then again, Brown, your friend the stoo'ard is lying. There ain't been any breeze around these parts that 'ud kick up sea enough to poop a ship like this and wash skipper and mate over the side. That's pure bunk—tidal wave, submarine earthquake, and all. Another darned queer thing! I h'ard that Smith tell you that she'd a cargo of case oil. They don't carry case

oil from Glasgow to New York, but they might carry it from New York to Glasgow."

"Then what do you think?" asked Comstock, with some concern.

"I don't believe she's from Glasgow at all. She's from an American port, and not long out by the clean hull on her. And furthermore, I believe that stoo'ard's a proper damned villain and he's shoved the skipper and mate over the side and seized the ship. Jest look at some o' them fellers for'ard there! D'ye notice how some of them are kinder proddin' the others? That crowd ain't working with a will! They're being bullied, or I don't know the signs. That bos'n there and them three at the fore t'gallant braces—proper dirty toughs, by the hard-bitten mugs on them! Your pal, Jimmy the Red, is evidently tryin' his hand at some other deviltry, and we'd better be on our guard. I wish I'd told the *Alfarata* to keep handy to us runnin' in."

He glanced around the sea line to where the schooner's sails made two faint saw-teeth on the horizon, and continued, "Have you any plans in regards to yer red-topped friend?"

The other shook his head. "Not yet," he admitted. "I've got to wait my chance now and see how things shape up. What you've told me about things on this ship makes it very difficult to plan anything. We're only two against goodness knows how many. And he's a dangerous devil—a very, very dangerous man. He's no fool or half-baked schemer, but a man of profound education in a certain way—absolutely unscrupulous, determined and as devilish as a rattlesnake. He's a radical of the radicals, a red, a Bolshevik, and he's

been the prime mover in all kinds of outrages and disturbances. And they have never caught him. He's too clever."

Spencer looked at the other curiously. "How did you get mixed up with him, might I ask?"

Comstock gave an apparently careless glance around and spoke softly.

"I was a chemist in the employ of the Plenzer Iron Works at Delancey, Pennsylvania, and during a spell of labour troubles I got infected with the socialism germ. I attended meetings of the workers and listened to the oratory of socialists, O.B.U.'s, I.W.W.'s and so on, and I was interested in the utopian theories advanced. I studied Karl Marx and the writings of others on similar themes, and became somewhat fascinated by their ideas. I would have been nothing more than a *dilettante* at socialism were it not for the high-handed manner in which the Plenzer people tried to break the unions and the rotten tricks they played.

"I knew of these things, and my sympathies went with the aspirations of the workers. I became a strong socialist in my views. I believed that when labour ruled, strikes and wars would be no more; that nationalization of industries and resources would be the panacea for all the world's ills. I was a moderate at first, but when Plenzer's dismissed me suddenly for my beliefs, I became almost a radical and fraternized with a violent crowd. I spoke to gatherings on the equality of man and the illogical distribution of capital and suchlike, but I never advocated violence. I believed in the ballot-box. Then I was introduced into the inner circles, and saw this man Kowalsky at a secret meeting when it was proposed to blow

up the Plenzer plant. I had become so angry at their treatment of their employees that I made no opposition to the plan. Then Kowalsky did the job, but he did it in such a manner as to incriminate me. I was properly framed up and given ten years' hard labour——"

He stopped as the crew came up on the poop to man the main-braces and set the mizzen sails. Spencer glanced at the canvas on the main and turned to see the steward talking to the man at the wheel. He had come up the after-companion. He gave a furtive look to where Comstock and Spencer stood and then came respectfully forward—treading the planks with almost feline paces.

"Breakfast is on the table, sir," he said, addressing the skipper.

Spencer laughed. "We had breakfast about five, but I cal'late we kin eat again. How about it, Brown?"

"Lead me to it, cap! Lead me to it! Reckon I never refuse grub at any time." Smith gave an odd smile and went below.

The Russian second mate came up on the poop, and Billy addressed him.

"West b' north, mister, and don't let her go to the nor'ad!" The man repeated the course and the others went down into the saloon.

The steward sent the food to the table by a gawky, sallow-faced English lad, and the two men ate silently. Both were thinking, planning, and scheming. Comstock busied his brains on ways and means for securing Kowalsky, alias Smith, and wringing a confession from him, while Spencer worried over this, the queerness of things on the ship, and the astonishing freak of fortune which

required his presence in Victoria on August ninth. Mixed with his reflections were thoughts of Mabel Comstock.

Billy was vaguely wondering if Mabel would marry him whatever happened, and Comstock was ruminating upon the irony of being waited upon by the man he wanted to extort his freedom from, when a grunt from the steward caused them to look up suddenly. Smith, his lips a thin, resolute line, his prognathic jaws hard-set and giving his pallid face a formidable aspect, was staring at them with unwinking amber eyes—menacing, with pupils contracted to pin-points, and as coldly fascinating as a snake's. In his hands he held two blued-steel automatics—both pointing unwaveringly at their heads.

"I'm sorry, gentlemen," he said, coldly polite, "but just place your hands on the table, if you please. That's right! Now, we'll talk business."

"What th' devil's th' matter with you?" sputtered Billy angrily. He was furious with himself for having been caught napping. Comstock was gasping open-mouthed, in stupid bewilderment, and his eyes were devoid of any other expression but blank stupefaction.

The steward disregarded Spencer's questions. "I'm sorry to have to do this, but I must ask you, captain, to change your plans a little. We want to head this ship the other way. New York or Boston has no interest for us. We left the big burg a week ago, and the U.S.A. is no longer a desirable habitation for me and my friends. You'll come to no harm if you do what you're told——"

"What d'ye want us to do?" blurted the skipper wonderingly.

“Navigate the ship to the Baltic, if you please,” answered the other calmly and still covering the two. “You put her into the Gulf of Finland and we’ll pay you both well for your trouble and send you home, passage paid, and unharmed. Refuse”—he paused for a moment and continued with menacing slowness—“and I’ll shoot you dead where you sit!” And the cold glare in his glowing eyes impressed Spencer with the fact that he would act upon his threat without the least compunction.

“What th’—who th’ juice are you, anyhow?” growled Billy, stalling for time and a chance to think, while Comstock gulped and piped inanelly, “Yes, yes, mister! Who are you—and—what have we done?” He looked more vacuous than ever.

The other favoured Comstock with a contemptuous glance, then he laughed—the metallic cachination which jarred the ear—and straightened his shoulders. He lowered the weapons a trifle and drew a deep breath.

“Who am I?” he reiterated, addressing Spencer. The fellow had an audience to impress, and he could not resist old habits. “Who am I?” he repeated again. “I’m a man of many names, but in the inner councils they know me as Jan Kowalsky or ‘Jimmy the Red.’ I’m a leader among my fellows and they are now as numerous as the sands of the sea. I’m an emissary of a mighty experiment, and I affect the social creed known to the vulgar in America as the Bolshevik. I am a Russian of the Russians, a Pole of the Poles, an American of the Americans—in short, I am a citizen of the world. I am at once a peasant and a master of socialistic education. I am a——”

He broke off with a contemptuous snort. “Pah!

I'm talking above your ignorant seaman's understanding. I'll talk ship for a change and you'll get me. This packet was in New York loading for France. She flew the flag of the first revolution, and her owners—poor fools—were pinning their faith on Koltchak—the capitalistic bungler who thought he could sweep the red flag from Soviet Russia. Myself and a few other comrades were being hounded out of dollar-controlled America, and we decided to head for Soviet Russia. We shipped in this vessel—her skipper was glad to get men who spoke his own lingo, and we bluffed him that we were Koltchak fans and Bolshevik haters—and the *Gregory* is now Soviet property. I made a mess of my story to you, and I saw that you doubted it. I'm not any too familiar with seafaring. If I had been, we'd not have been obliged to pick you two men up. But we tossed the skipper and the two mates overboard—there were two mates, my friends, for Comrade Kimeneff is merely a sailor and was never second mate—and afterward found out that we were a bit hasty. There were no navigators aboard so we contrived to hook you two fishermen. That's the story of the *Gregory's* voyage to date."

The menacing look seemed to have faded from Kowalsky's face, and he regarded them with tolerant amusement. He sat down at the other side of the table and placed his weapons upon it and within instant reach of his hands. Spencer reached out his foot and gave Comstick a light kick, inwardly praying that he would receive and understand the telepathic message that went with it, then with an injured expression on his boyish features, he grumbled :

"Well, mister, we ain't got no quarrel with the Bolsheviks or Russia or anyone, and I don't see why you need to spring yer plans on us two poor devils of fishermen with a couple o' pistols in yer mitts. We ain't armed, and we ain't lookin' for trouble, and what could we do aboard this hooker to you fellers? You only needed to come to us, gentlemanlike, and tell us your proposition and make it worth our while. Me 'n' Brown here'll be glad enough to pick up an extra dollar or two these hard times."

Kowalsky, at the other side of the table was smiling and leaning back in his chair, but with his hands near the automatics. He appeared to be enjoying the effect of his hold-up in Spencer's placating talk and Comstock's floundering wits.

"Now, mister," ventured Spencer respectfully, "how much will you pay us"—the young skipper gave Comstock another kick and continued—"to take the ship across——"

Quicker than a flash, he clutched the tablecloth with a contraction of his outspread fingers and hauled it towards him with a mighty downward jerk of his arms. The guns leaped away from Kowalsky's hands and as the man swung himself forward to secure them, Comstock jumped up and pinned him to the table. Billy grabbed the weapons from out of the debris at his feet and gave the Bolshevik a terrific blow on the side of the head. Ere Kowalsky could cry out, Billy had him pounded into insensibility.

"A poor fool sculpin for sich a hellion as he makes out to be," growled Spencer, hauling the inanimate steward aft and away from the skylight. "He looked hell 'n' all when he was givin'

us his little song and dance, didn't he? And he fell for a pair of bone-head fishermen." He stopped and espied the cabin-boy peering fearfully from out the pantry. "Grab that kid in the pantry, Brown, and don't let him sing out or skip for'ard. I'll tie up this red-haired Soviet rat."

Comstock came aft with the English cabin-boy in his grip. The lad was terribly frightened.

"You're English, ain't you?" barked Spencer. "You ain't one of them Sovietsers, are you? No, I thought not. Now, son, tell me! Are the hands aboard here all Bolsheviks? Ain't there no white men among them? Are they all red?"

The English lad recovered his wits and answered haltingly: "There's abaht six hof them for'ard wot's Bolsheviks, sir. The hothers were forced into hit, sir."

"You're a smart lad," snapped Billy. "Now, son, you don't want to be hung for mutiny and murder on the high seas, do you? Of course not! Well, I'm a-goin' to give you a little job. You jest go for'ad and tell two of the hands what ain't Bolsheviki that they're wanted in the saloon. Pick out the best. Can you do that? Have ye two men in mind?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy confidently. "There's two. A.B.'s—Andrew han' Peter. One's Scotch, t'other's Norwegian, han' they hain't reds."

"Skip along and git 'em, son!" Spencer turned to Comstock. "We'll chuck this Kowalsky joker into a room and lock him up, and when those men come aft, we'll go up and pay our respects to that second mate. He'll be lookin' for his breakfast soon."

v

Two typical deep-water seamen shambled respectfully inside the cabin door with their hats in their hands. One was dressed in a faded khaki tunic, and Spencer recognized him as the man who expressed passive resentment in his face earlier in the morning.

"I've just clipped the wings of that damned stoo'ard," said Billy calmly, "after he flashed a couple of guns at us and tried to make us run the hooker for Red Russia and Mister Lenin. Now, you men, I cal'late you don't want to get your necks stretched for makin' away with your skipper and mates, do you?"

The others shook their heads vigorously, and the man in the soldier's tunic growled sourly: "We're no Bolsheviks, sir, but we couldn' help oorsel's. There's six gunmen amang th' hands ready tae blow oor heids aff if we look skelly-eyed——"

"Good enough, I believe you! Now, I'm a-goin' to take charge of this hooker and run her for Boston. I'm a-goin' to let you two fellers go for'ad again and tip off the honest-to-goodness guys what's happening. I'm a-goin' to muzzle that second mate in a minute and when I sing out 'Aft here, the white men!' you get your fellers to run up on the poop. Think you can remember that?"

The Scotchman smiled. "Shairly, sir!"

"Right! Away for'ad and do that little thing and see you don't spill the beans!"

Mr. Kimeneff was relieved by Comstock and clumped down the after-companion, hungering for his breakfast. Between the foot of the stairs

and the mizzen-mast, he was met by Spencer who prodded him under the ear with the cold muzzle of an automatic pistol and signed to him to sit down on the plush settee aft of the mast and place his hands behind him. The English cabin-boy tremblingly snapped a pair of rusty handcuffs on his wrists and Kimeneff was ordered to rise and allowed himself to be piloted to a spare room. Here he was leg-ironed and locked in to ruminate over what had happened and to mourn the loss of his liberty and his breakfast.

Pocketing the pistol, Spencer went up on the poop. The breeze was freshening and there were signs of dirty weather to the sou'west. He stood alongside the man at the wheel and glanced into the compass.

"Der vind is knocking her off," observed the man. "She's two points to der nor'ard now, sir."

Spencer nodded and walked to the poop-break to where Comstock stood. A group of the hands were loafing around the donkey-boiler room. "Look after that feller at the wheel, Comstock," said Billy shortly. "The fun's beginning." And he roared: "*Aft here, the white men!*"

At the strange command, a mob of sixteen dungaree-clad shellbacks of various nationalities padded along the main deck at the run and swarmed up the lee poop ladder headed by Scotch Andy and Norwegian Peter. Around the donkey-room stood six of the hard-bitten characters Spencer had noticed, and they were staring at the runaways in surprise. One of them was the bos'n, and he was the first to recover. He lugged an automatic out of his pocket and was about to fire at the crowd huddled on the poop when Spencer fore-

stalled him with a couple of shots which impinged on the steel sides of the house. The bos'n and his five companions hastily ducked into the donkey-room.

Andy remarked calmly, "All them yins for'ad noo are Bolsheviks, and they've a' got pistils. 'Twas them wot shot an' kilt th' skipper and th' twa mates——"

As he spoke a pistol cracked, and a bullet whipped a splinter from the teak rail near him. "That's yon damned donkey-man," growled Andy unmoved. The mob on the poop scattered for the shelter of the masts and deck-houses or grovelled on the planks. Spencer, himself, lost no time in flopping to the deck when a fusillade of bullets whined around him.

"I ain't a strategist," he murmured regretfully, "or I'd have thought out a better way than this." He glanced carefully round to see who was at the wheel and found to his satisfaction that the man was a loyalist.

Billy looked carefully over the bucket rack for'ad and saw the six gunmen watching the poop from over the winch in the donkey-room. The donkey-boiler was located in the after-part of the midship house, and the donkey-room was partly open where the winch was bedded. Billy raised his automatic and essayed another shot. The bullet "clinged!" on the barrel of the winch, and the six heads vanished. A moment later another volley forward ripped splinters from the rail and "spanged!" on the iron shaft of the mizzen-mast. "Humph!" remarked the skipper calmly, "I reckon they're well heeled."

Spencer ruled the ship aft, but the others held

her forward. But Billy's crowd had some freedom of movement and possessed the ship's stores, whereas those in the donkey-room could not get out of their fortress without the risk of being shot from the poop.

While his men were below in the saloon searching for weapons, Spencer and the Scotchman crawled into the chart-house. They flopped on the settees as a bullet smashed the glass of the forward windows.

"A desperate gang—them Bolsheviks," remarked Billy. "How'll we drive 'em out or make 'em surrender?"

The sailor laughed grimly. "They'll no surrender easy, them chaps! They're a cauld-blooded crowd. Ye sh'd ha' seen th' way they did for the poor auld skipper and the mates. Juist stood aff and filled them wi' lead—th' most devilish piece o' wark I've seen in a dog's age—and that swab of a steward standin' by smilin' wi' them cat's eyes o' his. There's only yin wey I'd want tae drive them oot, sir, and that's with a Mill's bomb, same's we did in France."

Spencer smiled. "We'll have to use different tactics, I cal'late. There ain't no bombs here, I reckon." Then a thought struck him, and he turned to the Scot. "You've bin a soldier I take it? Yes? Well, you take this gun and these clips o' cartridges and keep them guys from coming out of that donkey-room. I'll slip below a minute." He handed the automatic over and slid out and down to the cabin. The ship was still heading on her course, and the helmsman, sheltered by the deck-houses, was able to steer standing up.

Below in the saloon, the loyal hands were clus-

tered forward watching the donkey-room through the ports in the fore-end of the saloon bulkhead. They were armed with various weapons in the shape of iron belaying-pins and hatch-battens. Comstock had found another automatic in the second mate's room and a supply of cartridges.

"Look, Mr. Comstock, I have an idea," said Billy. "Dirty weather's a-coming, and we've got to get those jokers out of that donkey-room. I'm afraid to rush them—they're too well armed. But we've got to be able to work the gear or something'll happen when the wind comes down. Now, is there any way in which we could make a bomb same's the soldiers used in France?"

The other paused from filling a clip of cartridges and showed interest in the suggestion. "Why, yes, it might be done if we had the chemicals——"

"Then let's overhaul the medicine chest in the mate's room," interrupted Spencer.

Both men entered the deceased officer's berth, and Comstock opened the mahogany chest found therein. He examined the labelled bottles with professional interest.

"We've got saltpetre and sulphur here," he murmured hopefully, "and here's a little nitric acid. There's a jar of glycerine, and by Jupiter! here's sulphuric acid——"

"Could you do anything with them distress rockets up in the chart-room?" queried the skipper.

The other turned to him with an exultant smile on his face. "Get them," he said quickly. "Also some small tins or jars. Leave me for a while and I'll mix up something devilish enough to blow

those fellows out of that place and into the middle of next week."

The skipper left him busy with the chemicals and the rockets and went up on deck to the chart-house. "I juist clipped the ear off o' yin o' them blighters," growled Scotty. "They were getting gay——"

"We're a-goin' to make some bombs," interrupted Billy. "My friend's a chemist, and he's busy manufacturing something that'll do the trick."

Andy gave a pleased chuckle. "You juist let me fling them there bombs, and I'll show you how we did it in th' bombin' squad o' the Argyll an' Sutherland Highlanders. I c'd chuck yin frae here that'll hae them Bolshies oot o' yon hoose in wee bits o' red meat!" And he grinned with blood-thirsty gusto.

Spencer was perturbed by the look of the weather. The barometer was tumbling down, and the sky was piling up with black clouds to the westward. The wind was light and flickering, and the canvas slatted and shivered against the masts. "It's a-goin' to blow," he remarked to his companion. "Call the hands and we'll try and get some of the after-sail off her."

Sheltered by the quarter boats, the hands slacked off sheets and halyards and manned clew-lines, down-hauls, and bunt-lines and through careful manœuvring managed to get the mizzen-royal, mizzen-topgallant, and mizzen-upper-top-sails confined in their gear. The *Gregory* was well-fitted with bunt-lines and the sails were snug enough for squalls as far as the mizzen was concerned, but if it blew hard it would be necessary to go aloft and make the canvas fast to prevent it being slatted

to ribbons. Spencer was somewhat relieved when the after-canvas was reduced down to a lower-mizzen-topsail. "We'll head her east and take this squall dead aft," he said to Andy. "Let's square the main-yards now if we can. We'll have to let the fore-yards take care of themselves as we can't get to the fore-braces."

They squared away under a hail of bullets from forward, but as long as the men crouched low none of the shots could take effect. Nobody dare approach the fore-end of the poop without crawling. It was an odd situation and Spencer, with the threat of the weather occupying his thoughts, glanced anxiously at the great squares of canvas on the fore and main. "With all that muslin on her," he murmured to himself, "she'll jump the sticks over the side if the wind comes on us butt-end first. But, until we can muzzle those murdering devils for'ad, we can do no more than we have done in stripping her for heavy weather."

Before dinner, a heavy puff of wind whirled down and sent the *Gregory* scampering east with clewed-up mizzen canvas flogging in the gear. It soon died away and while they munched a cold dinner, the ship lay rolling in a windless swell.

At one o'clock great drops began to fall on the decks from an overcast sky and Spencer whistled at the sight of the low barometer. "Cripes!" he muttered anxiously, "we're a-goin' to get some dirt." And he mentally quoted the old sea adage:

"When the rain's before the wind,
Tops'l-sheets and halyards mind!"

It was coming down in torrents when Comstock crawled into the chart-room with four innocent-

looking condensed-milk cans, strapped and bound with wire, in his hands.

"I've got something real devilish here," he said pridefully, as he deposited them carefully upon the settee. "I used the chemicals in the medicine chest and some of the ingredients in those distress rockets. They're vicious—so be awfully careful with them."

The ex-soldier picked one up and scrutinized it with professional interest. "A fuse bomb—juist like them jam-pots we used in France afore they give us the proper hand grenades. Anything in it 'sides explosives?"

"Tacks, screws, and bits of steel," returned Comstock. "The fuse is timed for a throw from the rail yonder."

"I'll chuck yin at them noo, if ye like, captun."

Spencer pursed his lips. "I don't like the idea of wiping them out altogether," he said. "It's a terrible thing to kill a man——"

The Scotchman favoured him with a grim smile. "Captun," he said solemnly, "ye don't need to wast ony sympathy on them blighters. Ef you'd ha' seen the cruel, cauld-bluided manner in which they kilt the skipper and mates aboard here, ye'd wipe 'em oot withoot ony scruples. They riddled the auld skipper wi' bullets—every yin o' them shootin' intae his body—and yin o' them went up tae the young second mate an' blew th' face aff him while he was on his knees beggin' for a chance tae live."

Spencer nodded. "I reckon you're right. How about their guns? You're liable to get plugged goin' for'ad——"

The other smiled. "I'm no feart o' bullets,"

he said dryly. "I've heard a wheen o' them in ma time." He bit off a chew of tobacco and continued. "Bide you here, now, and watch me mop up yon donkey-room pillbox in style." And he slithered out into the rain with the wirebound condensed-milk can clutched in his fist.

The men, in their sodden clothing, crouched around the poop and watched the Scot with palpitating hearts and anxious eyes. Some, over-eager to see, exposed themselves and brought a fusillade of bullets zipping and whining. Andy turned around and cursed the careless ones with biting oaths, then, like a stranded seal endeavouring to make the water, he crawled on his stomach over the sluicing planks toward the poop-break.

He reached the standard compass and cautiously peered forward in the direction of the donkey-room from which automatics were spitting viciously. Then, squatting on his heels behind the binnacle stand, he struck a match to ignite the fuse. The spectators aft held their breath. It was a tense moment.

There came a muttered curse from Andy. The match had gone out in the downpour. He struck another, and the audience with nerves stretched to breaking, almost shouted aloud at the delay. Had the fuse become wet? The second match went out. He opened the door in the compass stand and clumsily struck a light therein. Twice he started and the crowd winced with him. They could almost hear the fuse sputtering.

Suddenly the Scot leaped to his feet. His right arm swung back and lunged forward and the gleaming tin spun—terribly slowly it seemed—through the air. In its parabola it grazed a slack

buntline and lobbed downward to the opening in the donkey-room. The watchers, awestruck and dumb with excitement, braced themselves for what would follow. Bullets were clanging against the mast, and the ship was rolling quietly in the swell with the rain pelting down from the brooding skies. It seemed an eternity since the missile of death was thrown.

Expected, yet unexpected, mind and eyes and ear comprehended a swift and terrific vision of red and yellow flame which illuminated the dripping sails and spars and transformed the pattering rain-drops into globules of blood and gold. Then came instantaneously a stunning, ear-splitting detonation followed by the clatter and clang of iron. The ship trembled to the shock, an acrid smoke belched up, and a man was shrieking.

Out on deck jumped Spencer. "For'ard with you, fellers!" he roared, and down the poop ladder he leaped with the bolder hands at his heels.

Bulged and twisted iron plating and a gaping hole in the roof of the donkey-room testified to the power of Comstock's grenade. Inside the place, misty with curling wisps of smoke, a man whom they recognized as the bos'n was screaming and tearing burning rags of clothing from his body. His face was blackened and bleeding. Two men were squirming on the shattered concrete floor—moaning and clawing amidst three black and smouldering heaps which remained prone and silent.

VI

"Square the fore-yards!" bawled Spencer, glancing apprehensively at the track of the squall

along the water. The men were pulling desperately at the fore-braces when the wind came a-roaring. Bang! The main-royal burst and a raffle of canvas rags slashed from the yard and festooned the stays. "Leggo yer r'yal an' t'gallant hal-yards!" shouted the skipper as he ran for that of the main upper-topgallant-sail and let it run. He and Andy manned the down-hauls and brought the yard down to the topmost cap.

For an hour the short-handed crowd toiled aloft making the canvas fast while the *Gregory* ran before the squalls under six topsails. "This is the breaking up of our fine weather," growled Spencer dismally to Comstock as they stood on the poop in the wind and rain, "and we're runnin' east like a hound." Billy was thinking of that Victoria estate and every mile the old ship romped to the east'ard lessened his chances of making a bid for it. He had less than seven whole days to reach the Pacific Coast city. Here he was two hundred and sixty miles east of Boston and heading for Europe on an uncertain sailing windbag. He squinted to windward and growled a sailor's anathema on the weather, murmuring: "But I'll soon fetch you up, my lady, when the squalls ease off."

Comstock went below and did not appear on deck during the afternoon. Billy thought the rolling of the ship had affected him, but he had no time to find out. The weight of the gale blowing compelled him to strip the fore and mizzen upper topsails off her. A big sea rose under the impetus of the wind and the ship rolled and plunged heavily amidst the cresting combers. Night shut down black with the stars obscured by sullen clouds,

and Billy decided to make the mizzen lower and main upper topsails fast at eight bells.

The English cabin-boy managed to rustle some food on to the table for supper, and when he came down to the meal, Spencer noticed, with surprise, that Comstock had shaved his beard off. He was seated at the table and apparently unaffected by the ship's motion.

"Yes," he explained, "I did so before interviewing friend Kowalsky. I had a pleasant hour with him. He recognized me quick enough——"

"Was he scared?" inquired the skipper.

"He has too much control of his feelings to express surprise at anything, but it jarred him though. I could see that."

"How about the confession?"

"Laughed at me with his cursed cackle," answered Comstock, "and started to bargain. Said he'd give me a confession to the Plenzer job if we'd put him aboard an eastbound ship. I told him that he was in no position to bargain and that I would see him switched into eternity for his work aboard here. He dared me to prove that he had anything to do with it. He's a hard case, but I'll get him yet. He'll sign gladly before I'm through with him."

Spencer made a hasty repast and left for the deck—leaving the other to his own resources.

After supper, Comstock showed considerable activity and spent some time carefully drafting out a paper for Kowalsky to sign. Then he carried the pen and ink and the paper to the prisoner's berth, and, after lighting the lamp, laid them on the small desk in the room. Kowalsky, lying in

the bunk, and lashed up with small log line from head to heels, favoured him with a baleful glance from his tawny eyes. In the light of the lamp his heavy, bulging jaws and his glinting, malevolent gaze gave him an appearance strangely akin to a snake of the flat-headed, deadly species.

"Well, my friend Comstock-Brown," he jeered truculently, "what's in your mind now? That confession, I presume?"

"Yes," answered the other calmly, "the confession. I've written it out for you to sign."

Kowalsky laughed in his irritating manner. "Let's hear it, Comrade Comstock. It'll while away these tedious hours of captivity."

"You'll not only hear it, Kowalsky," remarked Comstock grimly, "but you'll sign it with some haste after I get through with you."

"That's a threat, is it?" the other smiled derisively. "Say your little piece, comrade—the audience awaits."

Comstock read and the other listened with a supercilious expression upon his pallid face to the somewhat lengthy and all-embracing composition. Comstock was leaving no loopholes.

"And I hereby declare and admit," concluded the reader, "that the bomb used was planted by me and that I entered the Plenzer premises on the night of the bombing disguised to represent the said Comstock; that I forged Comstock's handwriting in a threatening letter sent to Arnold Plenzer; that I arranged for Comstock to be in the vicinity of the plant at the time of the bombing by means of a fake message, and that all my actions were designed to throw the blame for the crime on the said Edgar Comstock." Comstock

paused and added grimly: "That's what you're going to sign!"

The captive cackled mockingly. The contracted pupils of his tawny eyes betokened the repressed hate which possessed him, yet he controlled his feelings admirably.

"What a nasty piece of dictation for a man to append his name to!" he flouted. "Crime, you say? I refuse to acknowledge such a word, for the end justifies the means. It was better for you to be the instrument than I, for I am the master. You were a handy tool. No, I don't like your literary effort. I could have made a masterpiece out of such a momentous document. You've made a botch——"

"Never mind its deficiencies," interrupted the other coldly. "It'll serve the purpose when your name's at the foot of it."

Kowalsky favoured Comstock with a scornful flash of his tigerish eyes. "And my name will never appear at the foot of it," he said with cold decision: "so you may tear up your little address of welcome and try something else."

Comstock took no notice. He was irritatingly calm. After arranging the paper and ink and pen on the desk, he went to the large porthole in the side of the berth and screwed it up as tight as the clamps would permit. Then bracing his body to the rolling of the ship, he gave the room a careful scrutiny, and turned to Kowalsky. "When you are ready to sign let me know. I won't be far away."

With eyes narrowed to slits, the captive drawled tauntingly: "Take yourself off, you poor fool. The prison odour clings to you. You are melo-

dramatic. You make me weary, Mr. Brown-Comstock."

Comstock locked the door carefully and clambered up on deck to where Spencer stood in the lee of the chart-house. It was black dark and raining; big seas were breaking phosphorescently in the gloom, and the ship, hove to under fore and main lower topsails and fore-topmast staysail, was plunging and rolling, while the gale whirled in her rigging as the masts swung to windward.

"I'm preparing to give Kowalsky a dose of third degree to make him sign a paper I've drawn up," he said to Billy. "I'd like you to come below when he's ready to sign."

Spencer smiled. "You're losing no time, mister. Weather don't stop you, does it?"

"With a man like Kowalsky, one cannot afford to delay. You can never tell what he may do."

"What d'ye mean?" queried Billy. "D'ye think he'll escape?"

"N-no! But he might make away with himself. His game is up as soon as we get in and I guess he knows it. He would die happy if he thought I had to serve out the balance of my term. He wouldn't help me any."

The other nodded. "You jest sing out when you want me."

An hour later, the pallid-faced cabin-boy came up on the poop and called Spencer. "Mister Brown wants you himmediately, sir." And Billy followed him below, excited with curiosity.

When he entered the cabin, his nostrils were assailed by the acrid smell of burning sulphur and he sniffed wonderingly. Then Comstock hailed him, and he approached the door of Kowalsky's

room to find the ventilators plugged and the door jambs covered with tacked canvas. Comstock was on his knees busily pumping sulphur fumes into the berth by means of a smoke-box used in fumigating. Sounds of violent choking and coughing, interspersed with vicious cursing, came from the interior of the apartment.

"I'm giving him a rare drilling," observed Comstock callously; "but it has to be done. He'll be ready to sign in a minute."

Within a minute, as forecasted, Kowalsky gave in. "I'll sign!" he gasped, and they opened the door hastily before the man strangled. Coughing involuntarily, Comstock threw open the porthole and allowed the fumes to dissipate with the entrance of the fresh draught.

The prisoner gulped the clarified air with rasping inhalations—broken every now and then by paroxysms of racking coughs—and his peculiar eyes glowed with fury.

"I'll sign, damn you!" he wheezed viciously. "But God help you if I get a chance at you for this, Comstock!" There was portentous menace in the look he flashed at the chemist.

"I'm not losing any sleep over your chances," retorted the other calmly. They hauled the man out and propped him up in a chair. His right hand was extricated from the lashings for an instant and he signed with trembling calligraphy. Spencer witnessed the document and Comstock trussed Kowalsky up again. They gave him a drink of water and bundled him unceremoniously into the bunk, and Comstock laughed exultantly.

"Got it at last!" he cried, and they left the

room with the prisoner's bitter oaths ringing in their ears.

VII

The wind blew in hard squalls until midnight when it hauled enough to permit the ship to lay a course for Boston Bay. With the lessening of the gale's violence, Spencer turned the hands out to make sail. He was feeling more cheerful with the shift of wind, and, now that Comstock had cleared his character, Billy began to devote his energies to getting the *Gregory* into port that he might make a bid for his brother's property.

He had no idea of what the estate consisted nor its value. Neither did he know how long it would take him to cross the continent from Boston to Victoria, B.C. But when he swung the *Gregory* west again, he figured he had exactly one hundred and forty-four hours to make the trip, and he resolved to cover as many miles as he humanly could within the allotted time. A little money might help him to an existence less strenuous and precarious than that of a fishing vessel skipper; it might help him to win Mabel Comstock. The latter thought inspired him to make haste, and when the hands hoisted and sheeted home the three upper topsails, he gave orders for the main lower-topgallant-sail to be set.

With a hard gale blowing and braced up, the old *Gregory* stormed along with her lee scuppers a broil of white water and solid green was cascading aboard by the weather fore-rigging. Andy kept the poop with Spencer and the two men discussed the *Gregory's* sailing abilities.

"She can sail, captun," observed the Scot.

"She was an auld London-Australiaman afore the Roosians got her and ye can see she has clipper lines."

Spencer nodded, and, balancing to a lurching roll, he scanned the black rectangle of the main lower-topgallant-sail showing against the sky. The foot of the sail was curved in an arc which betokened the great pressure of the wind which filled it. "How's her gear?" he asked.

"No bad, sir," replied Andy. "It's all fairly new and she's got a guid suit o' sails on her. She'll stand drivin' a bit——"

"I hope so," said Billy quickly. "I'm going to try her. Get the crowd out and let them give her all she can hang and——"

The Scotchman looked at him questioningly. "Ye'll be meanin' juist tae gie her th' fore lower-t'gan's'l, I take it, sir——"

"Aye," said Spencer briskly, "and the fores'l, the upper main-t'gan's'l, the mizzen t'gan's'l, and mizzen and maintopm'st stays'ls. I'll see how she stands that afore I give her any more."

"She's no a fishin' schooner, this yin, sir," ventured the other a trifle anxiously and hesitating before he gave such an apparently rash order.

The skipper laughed and clutched the rail as the ship rolled her lee under in a heavy puff. "I know that, m'son. She c'd carry a fishin' schooner on her davits. Give her the muslin, m'lad. What she won't carry she can drag."

The other still hesitated and looked aloft. "If ye set mair sail the noo, we'll never be able tae tak' it in," he protested.

Spencer grinned. "You won't have to," he said. "Get it on her. She's too slow for my taste."

Andy clawed his way for'ad to where the watch were sheltering in the wrecked donkey-room. The boiler itself was undamaged and the place had been cleaned up. The bos'n and another man were alive, though badly cut and burned, and they were bandaged up and placed in fo'c's'le bunks. The four others were lying under the fo'c's'le-head where the sail-maker busied himself stitching them up in canvas shrouds.

"The young fella aft there is singin' out for mair sail, lauds," and he repeated the order. The men growled, "He'll be jumpin' the sticks out of her!" "She'll be a half-tide rock!" So they opined, but at sea it's a case of "growl ye may, but go ye must!" and they gave a hitch to their soul-and-body lashings and buttoned their sou'-westers under their chins as they staggered forward to face the deluge of water at the fore gear.

From the poop, Spencer saw two hands scrambling up the fore-rigging, and he knew that his orders were being carried out. A few minutes later, the big foresail was loosed and bellying and flogging in the gear. Then a hoarse chorus came echoing to his ears amidst the roar and swish of the sea, and when the sheet was hauled aft and the fore-tack swayed down on the cat-head, the *Gregory* felt the urge of the extra canvas. Whole seas came thundering over her bows and seething brine came swirling to the poop ladders.

Andy came panting out of the gloom—his oilskins shedding salt water.

"We had a hell of a time gettin' that fores'l on her, sir. D'ye no think that's enough for juist the noo? There's no livin' for'ad and the sail-maker was sayin' it's nae manner o' use for him tae

stitch them Bolsheviks up as twa o' them have been washed off th' fore-hatch and ower th' side a'ready." He stood respectfully awaiting Billy's answer.

The skipper scanned the straining fabric before him and gave a glance at sea and sky to windward. The ship was rushing along with thunderous roarings of outraged water thrust from her shearing bows and the big foresail bellied hard against the fore-stay and tugged at sheet and tack in two swelling breasts of canvas. The rounded arch of it told of tremendous wind-urge, and Billy enjoyed the sight. He had sailed in square-riggers before, but only as a seaman. Here he was driving one as he had often longed to drive one, and he was intoxicated by the thrill of it.

But he was a schooner man—a fisherman sail-dragger—and one of the reckless type who cared little for spars and gear. No windjammer skipper would press his ship as Spencer was doing. He judged the *Gregory's* capabilities just as he would judge a stoutly rigged, well-ballasted Grand Banker.

"She hasn't got her lee rail under yet," he shouted in Andy's ear.

She took a lee roll that moment and rang the poop bell herself, but Billy affected not to notice the denial on the ship's part. "She'll stand more. Away ye go on yer stays'ls and we'll give her the fore lower-t'gan's'l as a starter." Wild steering of the plunging, driving ship caused him to add, "And send a good hand to the lee wheel."

The *Gregory's* crowd set the sails with many misgivings. "She'll spill us all into the drink or something'll go," they forecasted. "That fisherman we picked up is one of them Bluenose sail-

carriers." Cursing with lurid deep-water oaths, they tugged and hauled at halyard and sheet, drenched with sprays and often with feet washed from under them by boarding dollops of green sea.

Spencer clawed his way aft and flashed an electric torch at the log dial. It showed a speed of twelve knots since the fores'l was set—good going for a square-rigger in that sea.

"This time to-morrer, if the wind holds, we sh'd be well in," he murmured. "Then if I skip for a train, I might be able to make Victoria in time. Jupiter! I wish I knew how long it takes to go from Boston to Victoria."

But not knowing stiffened his determination to drive the ship for all she was worth.

The crowd had just sheeted home the fore lower-t'gan's'l when a panting figure cannoned into Spencer. He grabbed the person with quick hands, wondering if it was friend or foe, but in the shaded light from the chart-room windows saw it was the English cabin-boy, pallid and gasping. "What's up, boy?" barked Billy apprehensively.

"He's escaped! He's escaped! Shot the cook, sir! Oh, gorramighty, sir, he shot at me!" He paused, choking, and caught the rail as the ship rolled.

"Who's escaped?" Spencer reached under his coat for his automatic and nerved himself for action.

"That stoo'ard, sir. That Bolsheviki feller. 'E called for Mister Brown, sir, 'n' I 'eard a fight in 'is cabin, sir, han hout 'e comes. The cook was goin' dahn inter the lazareet for stores, sir, han 'e shoots 'im dead——"

"Shoots who dead?"

“The cook, sir——”

“Hell’s bells!” ejaculated Spencer aghast. Kowalsky free and with a gun! Shot the cook! And Comstock? The skipper ran to the poop break and roared for the watch to lay aft. As they shambled along the deck, he cursed them for their tardiness. He met Andy at the poop ladder.

“Kowalsky’s adrift and he’s got a gun. He’s done for the cook already and I guess Comstock as well. Come down with me! Got your gun? We’ll go down the after-companion. You others get belaying-pins—anything—and enter the saloon by the main-deck door. Hurry, for God’s sake!” And followed by the Scotch sailor, he ran along the lurching deck for the after-entrance to the cabin.

Kowalsky was just coming out of the room in which Kimeneff was confined when Spencer leaped down the cabin stairs. The after-part of the saloon was dark, but the skipper saw the man by the light emanating from Kimeneff’s berth. The hands had opened the main-deck door and were gingerly stepping inside the saloon when Kowalsky saw them. With his tawny eyes blazing, he raised his automatic and fired two shots into the thick of them, but the rolling of the ship spoiled his aim. The bullets smashed the glass of a port and the crowd scrambled, panic-stricken, outside again. They were taking no chances.

Their entrance, however, diverted Kowalsky’s attention from Spencer and Andy. Billy, with pistol ready, swung around back of the stairs, leaving the Scotchman, also armed, where he was. By doing this, the alleyway, in which Kowalsky stood, was blocked.

Spencer reached his position behind the steward.

“Hands up, you blighter!” he roared, levelling his gun.

Kowalsky tried to leap back into the room again but was blocked by the lumbering Kimeneff who was coming out. Andy fired, and his shot splintered the panelling alongside the man's head. Quicker than the eye could follow him in the half light, Kowalsky ducked to one side and jumped down the open lazaret hatch located under the cabin stairway. The heavy hinged hatch cover slammed shut—effectually imprisoning Kowalsky below.

Kimeneff came out of the room and spied Andy at the fore-end of the alleyway. He had also secured a pistol and he began firing at the Scotchman who dodged instantly behind the stairway bulkhead. Billy could have killed Kimeneff there and then, but he disliked shooting the man in the back. Instead he shouted a command for the fellow to put up his hands. The Russian wheeled and fired. It was a snap shot, but the bullet ripped the skipper's oilskin coat, and Billy also pulled the trigger. His bullet scored a furrow in Kimeneff's scalp, and the man roared.

He stood in the alleyway, balancing his body to the rolling of the ship, and yelling wild oaths and threats in Russian and broken English. He was enraged, and the expression on his heavy Slavonic features showed that the skipper's bullet had aroused in him the fanatic frenzy of the berserker. “Ay get von of you!” he bawled. “Angleesh son of a peeg! Ay keel you, py Gott!” And with the blood running down over his face, he looked a fearsome sight.

“Wull I plug him, skipper?” yelled Andy.

“Not if you can possibly help it,” he shouted back. And to Kimeneff he cried: “Drop that gun, you fool, or we’ll shoot!”

The Russian winced at Billy’s voice, and he made a sudden dash for the bulkhead behind which Spencer sheltered. But Billy was not to be caught and had shifted his position around the partition which backed the cabin stairway. He had slipped off his heavy seaboots in the meantime and he hurled one of them at the head of the Russian as he rushed, buli-like, around the corner. The boot was thrown with sufficient force to stagger the man with its unexpectedness and a lurch of the ship sent him flat on his back. He fired his automatic as he fell, but the shots ripped into the overhead beams, and Andy ran along the alleyway and swung his foot at Kimeneff’s head. The kick from his heavy boot sent the Russian into the land of dreams.

“Holy mackerel!” panted Billy. “That was a hot session! Tell those dam’ cowards to come in and fix things up here!”

He lit the lamp in the alleyway, and its light revealed a dark heap on the deck by the lazaret. It swayed slightly with the rolling of the ship, and Spencer, horror-struck, saw that it was the body of the cook. The man had been shot directly between the eyes.

“God save us!” he muttered anxiously. “Where’s Comstock?”

He found him lying on the floor in Kowalsky’s late prison. He was bleeding from a blow on the back of the head and blood oozed slightly from a wound in the shoulder. With the aid of a sailor, he lifted the unconscious man to a sofa and hastily

opened his shirt. The small puncture in the shoulder above the heart gave Billy some alarm.

"Get me some brandy or whisky or rum," he ordered the cabin-boy. "The cut on the head isn't much, but this looks dangerous." Andy entered, and Spencer, pointing to the shoulder wound, inquired, "What's that? Bullet wound?"

The other shook his head. "Don't look like it. Mair like a stab."

With the administration of the stimulants, Comstock regained consciousness and told what had happened. He was lying down on the settle in the after-saloon feeling rather squeamish with the ship's motion when Kowalsky had shouted his name. Never dreaming that the man had wriggled out of his lashings, Comstock entered. Kowalsky, armed with a dagger which he had made out of a letter-spike, stabbed him in the shoulder as he passed the end of the bunk. He fell and struck his head on the corner of the desk, and, as he lay insensible, Kowalsky possibly thought that he had stabbed him in the heart.

"Did he get your paper?" asked Spencer anxiously.

The other gave a faint smile. "No! I didn't carry it with me."

Spencer had many things to attend to that morning. The ship was slugging along through the dark with a press of sail on her and required vigilant watching, and Kowalsky, with unknown potentialities for evil, was armed and loose in the lazaret.

"Could he set the ship afire?" he had asked Andy and had felt some relief when the other replied: "Not much doon there tae burn and he

canna get intae the hold. But if he has matches wi' him, ye canna tell."

Spencer, however, had searched Kowalsky pretty thoroughly, and unless he had picked up some, he was not likely to have anything capable of raising fire.

He had just finished bathing and saturating Comstock's wound with iodine and had made him comfortable in a lee-side berth with the English cabin-boy to watch him, when Andy returned.

"If he canna get fire, he can get water," he said calmly. "Oor red freen's been busy doon ab'low. I can hear water pourin' intae th' lazareet an'——"

"How can that happen?" asked Billy aghast. "He can't knock a hole in an iron ship's sides."

"Naw," returned the other, "but this yin used tae be an emigrant shup and there's ports doon in her 'tween decks. Kowalsky has evidently opened the iron dead-lights and either opened the ports or knocked oot the gless. Wi' her side doon in the water like it is the noo, it'll no be lang afore there's a power o' water in her. Maybe enough tae scuttle her——"

Spencer passed a hand across his eyes. "By the ol' red-headed Judas Priest!" he ejaculated. "This is the hottest twenty-four hours I ever put in in all my existence. I sh'd ha' shot that swine when I had the chance, for I see us pullin' for Boston in the boats yet!"

VIII

Spencer doused all the cabin lights and cautiously opened the lazaret hatch where the sound of rushing water was unmistakable. He shouted down into the blackness: "Come up out of that, Kowalsky!" But his only answer was a jeering

laugh in the irritating manner Spencer had learned to hate.

"I'm going to flood her and sink her," came the mocking voice out of the darkness, "and I'll shoot the first man who attempts to come down. The law will never get me, and I'll do my little best to take a few of you pigs along when she goes. Move off——"

There was a crack of a pistol and a bullet thudded into wood. Billy let the hatch slam and shot the bolt. "By golly!" he muttered dolefully, "I was never in the trenches, but I cal'late I've had as many bullets whizzin' around me as any soldier this few hours. Them Bolsheviks must ha' come aboard well heeled."

In company with Andy, who was the best and most intelligent man in the *Gregory's* polyglot crew, he sat down at the saloon table to discuss a plan of action.

"How can we stop that water from comin' in?"

"Ef you were to run her off afore the wind," replied Andy, "she wouldna take sae much as them ports are juist above her water-line."

"We're headin' for Boston," said the other grimly, "and she's agoin' to keep aheadin' for Boston even ef she fills till she's awash. The pumps are no use, you say?"

Andy nodded. "Ye see, captun, there's no scuppers in them 'tween decks that'll let th' water go down intae th' bilges for th' pumps tae get at it. That lazareet'll fill tae th' beams wi' water and ye canna get it oot onless ye were tae bore holes in the deck o' th' place tae let it get ab'low."

Billy nodded and remained thoughtfully silent. Kowalsky knew that his life was forfeited as soon

as the ship arrived, and he'd sooner die by drowning in the lazaret than face trial and the electric chair. Callous type that he was, he would take delight in dying if he thought he could carry Spencer and all the others to the bottom. With a gale blowing and a heavy sea running, the boats would have a hard time keeping afloat. It was doubtful if they could keep afloat.

"How can we get him out of his hole?" he asked the Scot.

"We might bomb him out," suggested the other, "but that's chancy. We might start the case-oil afire."

"How about sulphur?" ventured the skipper.

"No very easy. He's got the ports open and it's a big place doon there."

Spencer smacked the table with his fist. "I have it!" he ejaculated. "We'll drive him out by steam!"

The Scotsman caught the idea quickly. "I believe it can be done frae the donkey-b'iler. We can couple twa or three pipes or hose ta th' main supply comin' aft tae them after-capstans an' th' cabin heaters and shoot them doon through holes in the cabin floor."

Spencer jumped to his feet. "Look after the job, Andy, and take all the hands you want. Hurry now, or she'll be settlin' down on us." And he left for the deck again.

The weather was unchanged, and the ship was still plunging and lifting through the big seas raised by the drive of the wind. Two men sweated in their shirt-sleeves at lee and weather wheel, and Billy noted with satisfaction that she was logging an even twelve knots.

It was breaking daylight by the time Andy reported the pipes coupled and a head of steam in the donkey-boiler. The lazaret ventilators were plugged and holes had been drilled, carefully and silently, through the cabin deck, and the steam pipes thrust in. Spencer examined the arrangements.

"Good enough," he said. "Now turn the steam in!"

With the turning of a valve on the main pipe, three jets of scalding vapour shot roaring into the lazaret and added their quota of sound to the swashing water below. There was something terrifying in the thought that a human being was down in the blackness underneath facing the rising flood and the scalding steam and Billy steeled his heart to keep the valve open. After five minutes, he could stand it no longer and ordered the steam shut off. He could picture Kowalsky writhing under the scalding jets and his tender heart could not endure the thought of it.

"He'll be deid after that dose," observed Andy callously.

Spencer ordered the lights turned down. Drawing his automatic and carrying an electric torch, he slipped back the bolt of the lazaret hatch and when Andy raised the heavy door, he flashed his light into the cloud of steam which billowed forth.

"Are you there, below?" he shouted, peering carefully in the vapour and standing clear of a possible fusillade.

"Are you there, Kowalsky?" he shouted again. There was no answer.

"He's deid sure enough," observed the Scot. "Nae human bein' c'd stand five minutes under

live steam. He's a wee bit o' suet by noo." And he grinned grimly.

Spencer stood silent for a moment and the swash of water below spurred him to action. Someone would have to go down in the lazaret and see the condition of affairs. He spoke to Andy. "I cal'late I'll slip down and have a look——"

"He might not be dead," remarked a man apprehensively. "With the ports open, he might have kept clear of the steam and be waiting for someone to go below——"

"Aye, that may be so," said Andy. "I've seen us chuck a bomb doon in a dugout and have a dam' fine wrastle when we went ab'low. But, captun, if you'll lead, I'll follow."

Spencer snapped off the torch and divested himself of his boots and oilskins. He waited until the steam dissipated and descended the ladder in the blackness, with automatic and torch ready. Andy followed behind.

They stood on the deck of the place with the water swashing around their knees in darkness that was almost palpable. The rolling of the ship was driving the water back and forth and at times they were deluged to the armpits. It was icy cold, but excitement deadened the chill of it, and Spencer's heart was pounding like a trip-hammer. The blackness awed him, and he feared to flash his torch lest it should reveal the agonized face of the dead.

Something struck him and he started horrified. Reaching out with his hand he touched a floating flour barrel and gasped with relief. He fancied it might have been the corpse of the man he was seeking and he hesitated to switch on the torch and confirm the dread that possessed him.

In the Stygian gloom there was an atmosphere of something portentous—depressing, ominous, and he was fearful, but not afraid. Kowalsky's tawny eyes, leering and feline, appeared to dominate the place, and he could picture their malevolent glare. If the man were dead, his malignant spirit seemed to pervade the dark. With pistol levelled ready, he braced his feet to the lurching of the ship. Heavy breathing near by caused him to start in alarm, until he remembered Andy. Then when the swirling water rolled away from him, he snapped the switch of the torch.

With the glare came a series of stunning explosions and a mocking laugh—the irritating cackle which Spencer knew so well—and Andy's voice boomed, "Tae starb'd wi' the light, skipper! Tae starb'd——"

Spencer acted, sailorlike, on the order instantaneously. Over his shoulder spurts of flame from Andy's automatic singed his cheek. The cackling laugh stopped suddenly. Half stunned with the detonations, Spencer stared dazedly along the glowing shaft of light and saw Kowalsky lying upon a pile of boxes and barrels stowed on the starboard side of the chamber. There was a porthole behind him—open and well above the sea.

While he stared at the dripping body on the boxes, the head dropped, there was a convulsive heave of the shoulders, and when the ship gave a heavy roll to loo'ard, the figure lurched forward and splashed into the water.

Spencer and Andy were hurled to the lee side of the ship, deluged to the waists. As they struggled against the down-rushing water and floating

débris, Kowalsky's body surged out of the flood and drove across their breasts. Spencer's wavering torch revealed a pallid, evil face looking up at them with a baleful sheen in the left eye. The other showed but a crimson cavity from which the blood was oozing and staining the brine which surrounded them.

"Hell's bells!" ejaculated the fisherman, horrified, and leaping out of the way. But the Scot—hard-case sailorman, and inured to such scenes in the red muck of Flanders trenches, laughed grimly and remarked, "I haveny forgotten how tae shoot, by Godfrey! Plugged the yella' eye oot th' perishin' blighter, by cripes! A guid shot, skipper, a damned guid shot!" And both men scrambled for the ladder.

IX

The hands were standing by—keeping calashee watch lolling in their bunks, easing tired muscles—while two of their number remained in the donkey-room ready to call them to action on the skipper's whistle. Some slept, while others discussed the "crazy sail-dragger" aft who was driving the *Gregory* as she had never been driven for many a long day. Continually flooded decks reminded the older hands of "eastings" runs when the clippers raced wool from Australia, and they thanked their stars they were aboard a ship that was originally built for such sailing. Normally, and with less reckless masters, the *Gregory* was a "dry" ship. Spencer was pressing her as few orthodox wind-jammer skippers would do nowadays and the old packet was resenting it by shipping it green.

"Another twenty-four hours of this travellin' and she'll be up to Boston Light, anyway," muttered Spencer cheerfully. He glanced up at a heavy squall cloud darkening the sun and sensed the coming blast.

"Stand by t'gallant-halyards!" he bawled to the pair in the donkey-room. They passed the word to the fo'c's'le crowd and they tumbled out to face the squall howling down with pelting rain.

Over and over went the ship until the poop bell clanged and the seas piled over the lee rail in solid cascades and seething froth. Aloft, the canvas strained at sheet and clew and swelled in great curves save where tautened bunt and leech-lines marred their contour. The long topgallant-masts were visibly bending to the weight of the wind in the canvas, and the men, hanging on at the rails with coils cast off and a turn of the halyards around the pins ready to let go, glanced nervously at the spars and the young fellow aft—cursefully wondering when he would give the word.

Spencer braced his body to the careening of the ship and hung on to the life-line of the weather quarter-boat. He was critically staring aloft and wondering how much strain the *Gregory's* gear would stand.

"If her mate was on to his job in lookin' after her," he murmured, "she'd carry her kites in this——" He stopped suddenly when a stronger gust smote the ship, and she wallowed her whole lee rail under. "Leggo yer t'gallant-halyards!" he bawled, when the men at the lee gear vanished from sight in a broil of cascading sea.

Half-drowned and luridly cursing men cast the halyards adrift and tugged on the down-hauls as

the yards came down with sails flogging. Then came a frantic shout from those at the big single topgallant-sail on the mizzen, and Billy ran to their assistance at the weather downhaul.

"Th' yards iss jam'dt and won't come down!" yelled a sailor excitedly—pausing in his frenzied tugging to look aloft.

"Never mind star-gazin'!" barked Spencer. "Pull, dammit, pull!"

But three men were not strong enough to haul the yard down with the parrel jammed against the mast with the list of the ship and the weight of the wind-filled sail.

"Aft here, some of you!" bawled the skipper. "Tally on——"

There was a sound of cracking aloft, and Spencer stopped short in his intended command to shout a warning: "Stand clear of her to loo'ard!" Unable to stand the strain, the mizzen-topgallant-mast with topgallant and royal yards and gear came hurtling down with twangings of snapped wire stays, floggings and thrashings of canvas, rope, and blocks. The royal yard broke adrift from the mast when it struck the topmast rigging and, up-ended, it crashed down through the port lifeboat, while the rest of the wreck went overside and hung by the stays, chains, and braces.

"A dam' fine mess!" laughed Spencer grimly. "I thought she would ha' stood that puff!" And to the men coming up on the poop, he said coolly, "Clear that raffle away. She's stripped for fair on the mizzen now!"

The cabin-boy came shambling along to where the skipper stood superintending the clearing away of the débris. "What is it now?" Spencer

asked him. "I never see you up here but what you're announcing either grub or trouble."

Without a smile on his pasty features, the lad informed Billy that Comstock was very sick. Spencer went below and found the wounded man in a high fever, in pain, and somewhat delirious. The examination made him anxious, and he pored over the "Shipmaster's Medical Guide" for directions as to what should be done in such circumstances. Following the treatment outlined, he did his best, but realized that port and a doctor were eminently necessary. As the ship had made considerable leeway and was a trifle south of her course to Boston, he decided to run her for Provincetown.

"Away ye go on yer upper t'gan's'ls!" he said to the crowd clearing away the last of the raffle. The burst of squall had passed, but it was still blowing very hard.

"D'ye mean for us to make 'em fast, sir?" The sails had merely been clewed up.

"Make fast nawthin'," growled Billy. "Set 'em again." He explained to the crowd: "My friend is a very sick man. We've got to rush him in to a doctor." They nodded dumbly.

"And you can set the mains'l as well," continued the skipper. "There's a power of shove in a mains'l, so get it on her."

The canvas was set and the log showed it. Thirteen knots increased to thirteen and a half and then fourteen. Billy was sure she logged fifteen in the heavy gusts when the wind hauled aft a little and allowed them to check the yards.

It was stupendous storming along, but Spencer was not driving her for the fun of it now. He was

urging her on for many reasons. Comstock was in a bad way and his war experience impressed him with the value of time where infected wounds were concerned. Then again, he wanted to get away from the *Gregory*. There was something sinister about her. Nine men had died violently aboard of her within a week and three were lying in their bunks suffering, and under the fo'c's'le-head lay the canvas-shrouded bodies of Kowalsky, the cook, and two of the mutineers. She was a death ship, and the atmosphere of bloody deeds hung heavy about her decks.

After dinner he came up on deck to see a fishing schooner ahead standing up from Georges for Boston Bay. She was running along under reefed mainsail, foresail, and jumbo, and certain distinctive marks identified her in Spencer's eyes.

"Jack Mac and the *Allie Watson*, by gum!" he exploded. The depressed feeling lifted itself from his boyish heart, and he remarked to Andy with an expectant smile, "There's a feller ahead that I'd like to trim in this one. I've trimmed him afore in a schooner, and, by Jupiter, I'd like to have a hook with him in a square-rigger. Turn the hands out, Andy boy, and sway everything bartaut."

Nothing will make a crowd of sailormen work so hard as when there is a contest between ship and ship. Spencer, tired out and harassed, forgot his many anxieties, and stalked the poop with a new glint in his eyes, while the men, entering into the spirit of the thing, trudged around the decks with watch-tackle and strop taking a pull on halyards and sheets. The cross-jack was dropped down and sheeted aft with the weather clew hauled up,

and everyone hoped the gear would stand the strain of the driving.

Black squalls came whirling up, and the *Gregory* staggered and trembled to their onslaught. The water on deck was so heavy that they rigged a Cape Horn life line from poop to fo'c's'le head and coiled the lee fore-braces up on the midship house. No man could make the passage of the lee deck, and the *Gregory* was plunging until solid green water covered the fo'c's'le head and thundered down in foaming cataracts.

"Holy sailor!" cried a grizzled old seaman, with something of admiration in his eyes. "Dis is de vorst I ever saw! Yess! Und I hov run der eastin' in smart ships, by Yiminy!"

Spencer stood aft by the wheel glancing aloft at the sails and over at the *Allie Watson*, and the two huskies at the spokes, straining and sweating in their singlets, steered according to his orders. They expected something to give soon, but they steered as they never steered before.

The schooner was quickly overhauled, and there were signs that she resented being passed by a clumsy square-rigged windbag. She shot up into the wind, and a mob of oil-skinned fishermen lined up along her main-boom. "He's shakin' out the reef," observed Billy exultantly. "Now we'll have some sailin'!"

It did not take the schooner long to get her whole mainsail up and when she swung on her course again, she had the whole four lowers hung. The *Gregory* had stormed past her, however, and in an effort to regain his lead, Macpherson sent his big fisherman's stays'l up between the masts. This extra canvas hauled him ahead a little, and

the excited watchers on the *Gregory* could see the whole of the schooner's deck as she rolled down with the heft of the wind in the canvas.

A vicious squall piped up, and the *Gregory's* taut back-stays whined to it. The *Allie Watson* vanished for a moment in the slash of rain which came down the wind, and, when she showed up again, Billy pointed across his weather quarter with a happy laugh. "There he is," he cried, "and his stays'l's gone! We've trimmed him! We've trimmed him!" The other craft had given up the contest and was heading to the northward.

The *Gregory* then decided she had stood enough. In the next squall, the main upper-t'gallants'l burst—leaving only two of the bunt cloths in the bolt-ropes. Ribbons of canvas festooned the stays and rigging and flogged themselves into white threads. The yard was lowered and the hands were preparing to bend another sail, when the ship dived into a tremendous sea and staggered to the shock of it. It knocked the jib-boom clear out of her, and the fore topgallant-mast with the royal and upper topgallant yards and sail came plunging down in a thundering, furiously thrashing raffle of canvas, wire, spars, and rope.

"Lord Harry!" ejaculated Billy in half-humorous dismay. "She'll be a wrack yet. It's easy seen this ballyhoo ain't no packet for carryin' a bit of sail!" Then he turned and grinned at the wheelsmen. "Well, boys, she's in fine heavy-weather trim now. We only need to rip that main t'gallant-m'st out of her to put her in Cape Horn rig. But, anyway, I'm glad her gear hung out long enough for me to trim Jack Mac. I'll

roast him good when I get my feet on Boston Fish Pier again ! ”

The men looked at him as he strode along the deck, and one fellow remarked sagely : “ That joker sh’d ha’ bin livin’ fifty years ago ! He’d of made a grand skipper for the bully ol’ *Dreadnought* or the *Flyin’ Cloud* or *Cutty Sark*, by Judas ! ”

The other assented. “ I’ve h’ard that those Bluenose fishermen were the great lads for carry-in’ sail. Now, I knows it, by Godfrey ! ”

X

Old Johnny Lovell came bustling out of his office. “ Come inside a minute, Miss Comstock,” he said. When the young woman entered his private sanctum, he picked up a long telegram and inquired, “ What do you know about a registered letter that was sent to Captain Spencer, care of this office ? ”

“ I gave it to him the last time he was here, sir,” replied the girl.

“ Did he open it, do you know ? ”

Miss Comstock thought for a moment before answering. “ I don’t believe he did, Mr. Lovell. He put it in his pocket, if I remember right.”

Old John grunted. “ Just like those fellows and the careless, don’t-care-a-cuss way they have with everything. It’s evidently a most important letter, too, for a firm of lawyers in British Columbia have sent me a telegram wanting to know if it has been delivered. Take a wire, please.”

Later in the day he came bouncing up from the wharf. The *Alfarata* had just made fast.

“ Spencer and a chap called Brown left the

schooner on Brown's Bank to navigate a Russian square-rigger into Boston," he said to Miss Comstock excitedly, "and I've just got another wire from those lawyers asking me to get hold of Spencer and rush him out to Victoria immediately as he's fallen heir to a considerable estate which must be claimed before noon on August ninth. Lord Harry, what can *I* do?"

He paced up and down his office, blowing clouds of cigar smoke. "That's him all over," he fumed. "Couldn't come home like any ordinary skipper, but must go hellin' off on Russian windjammers. S'pose he was itching to try his hand sailing a square-rigger for a change. And I'll bet he'll rim-rack her if they allow him to play with her. Who the deuce is this feller Brown that he took as a passenger——"

Miss Comstock turned deathly pale and swayed against the desk. Old Johnny gazed at her over his spectacles. "What's the matter, child?" he said, with kindly concern in his voice. "Ain't you feeling well to-day?"

Mabel recovered herself with an effort. "I'm all right, Mr. Lovell," she said, with a faint smile. "I just took a little giddy turn."

"You ain't been looking good for the last two weeks," remarked the other. "Get a substitute and run away for a while."

At this juncture, two quietly dressed men entered the office, and Mr. Lovell swung around. "Well, sirs?"

One of the pair gave a nod of his head in the direction of Miss Comstock.

"I'd like to speak with that young lady, mister," he said politely.

Apprehensively, Mabel advanced to the counter. "You're Miss Mabel Comstock?" asked the man quietly.

"Ye-e-es!"

He leaned over the counter. "Where is your father, miss?" he inquired, but in a firm, subdued voice.

The young woman turned white and gripped the edge of the counter with hands which worked nervously. Trembling, she answered:

"I don't know."

The other smiled faintly as if he expected just such an answer. "Of course not," he remarked in the same quiet tone, "but you saw him lately, didn't you?"

Mabel felt her heart beating like a trip-hammer and the room was swimming around. She pulled her nerves together and answered in as firm a tone as she could muster: "No!"

"Now, Miss Comstock, we know better than that. You saw him on the night of July twenty-third, did you not?"

The girl made no reply, and the man continued: "We know you saw him, so it don't matter. Where did he go?"

"I can't tell you," she managed to articulate.

"Now, now, miss, you must tell me! You know where he went after he left your flat that night."

"I *don't* know," she repeated dully. Her heart was palpitating so fast that a choking sensation was overcoming her, and the room was whirling around dizzily.

The stranger fixed her with cold, unsmiling eyes. The quiet politeness was gone from his tones as

he said firmly: "Miss Comstock! You *do* know where your father has gone. Tell me now and no more nonsense——" He stopped suddenly when the girl reeled and collapsed to the floor in a faint.

Old Johnny had been standing at the back of the office watching the scene with some curiosity, and when Miss Comstock fell he rushed indignantly forward. "What are you fellers up to? What have you done to the girl?"

The two strangers came behind the counter and exhibited metal badges pinned inside their coats. "Detectives?" ejaculated the fish dealer in surprise. "What do you want with her?"

One of the men busied himself bathing the girl's forehead and wrists with cold water, while the other explained to Lovell the object of their visit.

"Her father was serving a ten-year stretch for blowing up the Plenzer Iron Works in Delancey, Pennsylvania, and he jumped the jug about three months ago. We traced him to his wife's flat here in Boston, but we don't know where he went from there. We do know that this young woman returned to her mother's flat with a gentleman friend—a fishing skipper—and we have a notion that he might have had something to do with her father's get-away and——"

Miss Comstock was reviving and showing evidences of becoming hysterical. Lovell was in a dreadful quandary, as his astute mind was putting two and two together. He knew that the gentleman friend was Spencer, and he immediately thought of the passenger the skipper had taken with him on the *Alfarata*. The deduction was obvious.

"Well, sirs, leave her be," he said. "She ain't

been very well, and you'd better not question her. I don't believe you have any right to question her anyway, if I know the law. Let her alone and try some other way of finding out." And he went over and stooped down by the sobbing girl and patted and soothed her in an attempt to quiet her distress. The detectives looked at one another, and the leader spoke.

"I reckon we'll go, Jack. No use bothering the girl." Turning to Lovell and Miss Comstock, he said: "We're sorry, but we're only doing what we're paid for. We'll go now. Good day!" And they swung out of the door.

Old Johnny led Mabel into his office and produced a treasured bottle of whisky from out of his safe. He gave the girl a small mouthful to steady her nerves, and it seemed to calm her. Taking a pretty stiff swallow himself, he hustled back to her side and patted her on the shoulder.

"Trust me, little girl," he said benevolently. "I won't let them bother you again."

Mabel looked up at his kindly face with tears in her eyes. "It's awful, Mr. Lovell, and I've been nearly crazy. Did they tell——"

"Yes, yes," soothed Johnny. "They told me all about it. I don't blame your dad. There's a few more o' them grasping, profiteering war plants ud be none the worse of being blown up——" He spoke thus in an effort to be kind. "And maybe your father didn't do the job, anyway——"

"He didn't!" interrupted the girl vehemently. "He was made the scapegoat for others."

Lovell nodded. "And he skipped off with young Billy Spencer, did he?" He spoke softly that none might hear.

The young woman made an affirmative gesture. She was afraid to speak.

"Just like the lad," remarked Old Johnny. "A fine lad, a rare boy—best skipper out of the pier!"

He lit up the butt of a cigar and puffed strenuously. "Now, my dear," he said at last, "I'm a-goin' to send you home in a taxi. You'll go away for ten days—you and your mother. Go away to-night. Go to Nantasket or any of them beach places and jest forget everything, and if any of them tees bother you—you jest phone or wire me, and I'll straighten 'em out."

He called a taxi, and when it arrived, he opened his wallet and pressed a number of bills into Mabel's hand. "Take that and enjoy yourself. Mind, now, get away to-night, you and your mother, and take it easy. Come back when you're feeling fit and don't worry about your father. We'll fix that up!"

He escorted her into a taxi, gave her a fatherly pat on the shoulder, and saw her off. Then he went up into his office and lost himself in thought and clouds of cigar smoke.

Late that night he landed down on the fish pier with a suit-case and an oilskin coat. Judson Moore, the man who brought the *Alfarata* to port, was with him, and both men boarded the deep-sea tug *Agnes Johnson*. The tug had steam up, and as soon as Lovell and Moore entered the pilot-house, her skipper gave the order to cast off, and she swung down the harbour. In a couple of hours she was steaming out to sea in the teeth of a stiff blow with the twin lights of Boston Lightship and the white flash of Minot's Ledge in sight abeam.

"This *Gregory* is a three-masted full-rigger, is she? How's she painted? Black, grey, or what?" Lovell was asking the question.

"She's a hooker of about twelve hunder' tons, I cal'late," Judson Moore replied, "and she's painted black with yeller masts and yards."

Lovell puffed hard on his eternal cigar, and his quick wits were working double tides. He had two jobs to accomplish. One was to get Spencer to Victoria, B.C., without delay, and the other was to help his stenographer's father to avoid the detectives undoubtedly waiting for him in Boston. The latter task was worrying him considerably. To aid in the escape of a convict was an indictable offence, and Johnny was praying and hoping that Spencer had managed to get Comstock away.

Early morning saw them plunging and rolling on the Stellwagen Bank, and the tug skipper and Judson Moore were figuring out the *Gregory's* probable course. "It came on to blow after the skipper and this guy Brown left us, and I cal'late that windbag had to square away east afore it," said Judson, "but Billy wouldn't be long afore swingin' her off for Boston. With the breeze what's bin a-blowin' for the last two days, he ain't far off ef I know him. He'll push that old windjammer some, I reckon, or he ain't livin' up to the name they give him—Speedy Spencer."

The tug skipper decided to run down toward Cape Cod for a while. If the ship was not sighted then, he would swing around and steam over to the Gloucester shore. Dawn revealed a wild sea and a breeze in their teeth. The tug was plunging bows-in to it and driving the spray over her in clouds, and the tug master with a pair of powerful

prismatic binoculars glued to his eyes was scanning the horizon.

As the morning brightened he stared in the wake of the rising sun and gave vent to an ejaculation.

"Cuss me, ef I don't see two square-riggers to the east'ard," he said, adjusting the focus of the glasses. "One feller's off to th' nor'ad headin' for Boston Light, and the other joker's headin' for Cape Cod way——"

"Describe 'em!" snapped Old John.

"Th' feller to th' nor'ad's under his two tops'ls on the fore and main, but this feller ahead seems to be half-dismasted. He's got no t'gallant-masts on the fore or mizzen, but he's draggin' all the sail he kin put on her——"

"Make for her," barked Lovell confidently. "That's Spencer sure! Half dismasted and swingin' all sail—that's his trade-mark sure as hell fire's hot! Make for him, cap, and we'll be able to see how much he can rim-rack a square-rigger when they give him the chance."

Within half an hour, the sailing ship came plunging into distinct view a mile distant. She was storming along with yards off the back-stays and there was a creaming bone in her teeth which told of the urge in her canvas. Her fore and mizzen masts showed splintered stumps above the topmast caps, and the odd lettering of her name on the bluff of the bow proclaimed the Russian.

"That's her," cried Moore, with a grin, "and sure enough, Billy's bin tryin' her out."

When the ship came forging up, the *Agnes Johnson* steamed around on the *Gregory's* weather quarter while Lovell stepped outside the pilot house with a megaphone.

"Hi-yi, there, Spencer!" he roared.

A figure waved a hand and whipped a pair of glasses to his eyes. After a brief scrutiny, he laid them down, and leaned over the rail. It was Spencer.

"Heave to—and—we'll—take—you—off!" bawled Old John, and his voice echoed in the towering sails of the ship.

Billy reached for a megaphone and shouted across the intervening broil of water: "Can't—stop—now! Makin'—for Provincetown. Meet—me—there!" And the *Gregory* swashed past—leaving the tug rolling in her wake.

The towboat skipper rang for full speed. "Swampin' Judas!" he growled, "but that wind-bag's travellin'! He'll be off Provincetown as soon as us!"

They steamed astern of the sailing ship, and the tug, forging along at twelve knots, barely maintained her position in the *Gregory's* wake. For almost an hour they ran in company thus, and the steamer failed to overtake the sailing ship.

Old John, anxious and bewildered, wondered why Spencer was making for Provincetown. "Darn him," he fumed. "I believe he's so crazy about racing that he jest refused to heave to so's he could trim this tug!"

The low sand dunes of Race Point showed up, and the square-rigger came in on her weather braces to round the tip of Cape Cod. When nearing Wood End, Spencer commenced reducing sail by clewing up his courses and lowering his upper topsails. Then the tug came alongside.

Lovell was met at the head of the Jacob's ladder by a weary-eyed, unshaven, and tired young

man whose face was wind-reddened and whose eyelids were heavy through lack of sleep. He greeted the fish dealer in a hoarse croak, and his feet dragged with the fatigue of many hours' standing and pacing.

"I come out here specially to get you and rush you off to Victoria," explained Lovell, "and"—drawing Spencer to one side he whispered—"where's Comstock? Did you get him clear?"

Billy straightened up with an effort. "He's below—a very sick man—but, thank God, a free man——"

"How?"

"He's got proof of his innocence," returned the other, "but if we don't get him under a doctor's hands immediately, he'll never live to enjoy his freedom." In a few words, he sketched the incidents of the voyage while Lovell listened in speechless, open-eyed astonishment.

The tug shoved the *Gregory* inside the harbour. Signals for a doctor and the police, flew from the gaff, and within an hour Comstock was being scientifically treated, while Kimeneff and the two others were ironed and taken ashore. The *Agnes Johnson* was steaming full-bore for Boston with Spencer snoring in her skipper's bunk. It was the morning of August fourth, and he had one hundred and twenty hours to capture his inheritance.

XI

It seemed to Billy that he had slept but a few minutes when he was awakened by Lovell. "We're coming alongside the pier now, cap'en." He rose, yawned, and felt a trifle rested by the nap. Step-

ping ashore, he was greeted by his friend Wesley Carson.

"I've done some scoutin' around this morning," said the latter, addressing Lovell and Spencer, "and I find your quickest way to get out to Victoria is to go by the Trans-Canada Limited from Montreal to Vancouver. It's a fast through train that does the journey in ninety-two hours from Montreal. But it'll only land you in Vancouver. You'll have to leave Boston to-night at eight-thirty and get the Trans-Canada at five to-morrow afternoon."

"You say it'll only land me in Vancouver?" echoed Spencer. "Can I get to Victoria by noon of August ninth?"

"That's the devil of it," returned Carson. "You can't reach Vancouver before ten o'clock on the morning of August ninth, and Victoria is located on Vancouver Island and a five hours' sail by steamer from Vancouver. I figured you couldn't possibly do it in time so I wired those lawyers explaining matters, and they wired back for you to come ahead. They are fighting for a restraint in the closing date of the will, and they think it can be managed."

While Carson was talking to the skipper, a man, whom Spencer recognized as the fellow he had clipped on the pier on the night the *Alfarata* sailed, approached and spoke. "You're Captain Spencer of the *Alfarata*, I take it?"

Billy nodded with a sinking feeling within him. The other took him by the arm and drew him aside. "Where's Comstock?" he asked brusquely.

"What d'ye want to know for?" growled the skipper.

The other flashed the badge of a detective officer

and fixed Spencer with a cold and determined eye. "You'll come along with me," he said grimly. "I've a warrant to apprehend you for complicity in aiding the escape of one Edgar Comstock who made his getaway from the penitentiary at Colville on the morning of April sixth. Don't make any fuss or I'll put the bracelets on you ! "

Spencer smiled. "I won't make any fuss, mister, and I don't mind telling you all about the affair——"

"Tell it to the chief !" snapped the man who was evidently cherishing resentment for Billy's handling of him two weeks past.

Lovell, who had heard the conversation, broke in anxiously : "You're not going to arrest him, are you ? He's got to catch a train to-night——"

The detective waved him aside. "He is already arrested and he has to come with me and see the chief."

Old Johnny cursed with indignation, but to no purpose. All four men tumbled into an automobile and drove to headquarters where Spencer was turned over to a superior official. The skipper told his story, and the other showed his disbelief at such an astonishing recital by the expression on his face.

"That's the best I've heard for many a long day," he said wearily, "and we do hear some queer ones——"

Billy spluttered. "Don't you believe me ? " he shouted. "Call up Provincetown and ask them there. You'll find that the *Gregory's* lying in the harbour and Comstock is at the hospital. Kimeneff and them other Bolsheviks are in the town jug and I cal'late they're plantin' Kowalsky and his pals out in the sand-hills——"

The official ordered Spencer removed for a while, and they went out into an anteroom. He sat with Carson and Lovell—the two latter wrathfully discussing the affair while Billy remained silent. He was thinking over events of the past three days, and his nerves were sagging and he was jaded and depressed.

After an hour's waiting, he was called inside again, and his companions were allowed to accompany him. The official regarded Spencer with some interest.

"I've been talking with Provincetown," he said, "and they confirm some parts of your story. I was inclined to disbelieve such an astonishing tale and thought that you had landed Comstock in Canada and spun me that yarn to clear yourself. This is a devil of a serious business. I cannot allow you to leave the country to-night."

Spencer and Lovell argued the unreasonableness of this decision and explained that a fortune stood to be won or lost by a few hours' delay.

"Think of what the lad's gone through already, sir, and don't spoil his chances of claiming his brother's estate," pleaded Old Johnny.

The other shook his head and said decisively: "I can't let him leave Boston to-day. Suppose he goes to Canada and we find that the happenings aboard that ship are not as he states? There's been eight or nine men killed aboard her. There will have to be an investigation into such a terrible affair. We want him our principal witness, and we find he's in Canada and refuses to come back. That means all kinds of trouble. You can appreciate my position. I would be dismissed instantly if I let him go without permission from the highest

authorities. You can go bail for him on condition that he does not leave Boston, but he can't go across the border."

Spencer remained in the bureau, and Lovell and Carson left the place, furious and wondering what to do. Old John swore he would see the State attorney, the governor, even wire the president himself, and he made full speed to the best lawyer in Boston. He spent a small fortune in telegrams and long-distance phone calls, and at midnight, his representations had effect.

Spencer was told that owing to the special circumstances of his case, he would be allowed to proceed on his private business on a tremendous bond from Lovell and under a guarantee that he would return within fifteen days. Old Johnny cursed the inflexibility of the law and swore that within fifteen days Spencer would have the State governor heading a delegation to acclaim him, and that Bostonians would give him the freedom of the city. But the cold fact remained that all trains for Montreal had gone.

Spencer was apathetic and crestfallen. The heart had gone out of him, when Old Johnny came bustling along, perspiring and excited. "You'll make it yet, son," he cried hopefully. "Wesley Carson's a-goin' to drive you up to Montreal in a car. I've hired the best and most powerful in Boston and your friend knows how to drive it. Hustle, son, and get some glad rags. He'll be ready for you in half an hour!"

Billy and Carson drove all night on the Boston-Montreal highway. They thundered through sleeping villages with glaring headlights illuminating the path and clouds of dust whirling behind.

Wesley, an expert driver, burned the miles and gas, and the rising sun revealed the level farm lands of Quebec's eastern townships through which they sped at prohibited pace.

Then the broad waters of the St. Lawrence opened before them, and they reduced speed to cross the river on the great Victoria Bridge. Weary, dusty, and with grit in mouth, eyes, and ears, they satiated famished appetites in a Montreal restaurant, and Billy laughed. "I reckon I live up to that there nickname of Speedy Spencer jest as much ashore as I do at sea. That drive was sure the fastest travellin' I ever done."

At five in the afternoon he boarded the Canadian Pacific Trans-Canada flyer and was soon storming west in the summer evening. The days that followed permitted Billy to rest his nerves and the ever-changing panorama of country served to soften the horrible memory of his voyage on the *Gregory*. Running on time like a clock, the crack train of the Canadian Pacific tore through the towns and farming settlements of Ontario and plunged into the vast areas of rocks, forests, and lakes of the northern regions of the Province. The stones and scrub dwindled and the earth levelled out when the prairie lands of Manitoba were reached, and Billy imagined he was forging over a great sea of green land when the train traversed the rolling plains of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Then came a morning when he gazed through the window at the mighty, snow-capped pinnacles of the Rockies, and he knew he was on the last lap of his journey when the Trans-Canada panted through the stupendous passes and canons of the

British Columbian cordillera. "This here packet has sure logged some knots sence we started," mused Billy, and he wished Fate had made of him a locomotive engineer. "I'd get some speedin' in that job."

At the descent of the Pacific slope a young man, wearing a returned soldier's button, boarded the train at Mission, B.C., and called out Spencer's name. He introduced himself as Walter Deloro—junior partner of the firm of McGraw, Hiscock & Deloro, Barristers, Notaries, et cetera, Victoria, British Columbia.

"We couldn't get a restraint on the time of closure on your brother's will," he said. "The institutions likely to benefit by the money opposed it. But I've taken a chance to get you over to Victoria in time. It's quite a distance from Vancouver to Victoria by water, and we couldn't do it in less than five hours. But we'll have two hours to do the distance when we arrive in Vancouver, and we'll fly it easy in an hour——"

"Fly it?" gasped Spencer.

The other nodded calmly, as if flying were the most natural thing in the world. "Yes! I've hired an aeroplane, and we'll soon boost you over the Straits of Georgia——"

"I don't fancy aeroplanes," interrupted Spencer nervously. "They ain't in my line at all, even though I'm fond of speed——"

The young lawyer laughed. "Oh, there's nothing to it, Mr. Spencer. You'll like it when you get up off the ground."

The train rolled into the Vancouver depot promptly to schedule time after twenty-nine hundred miles of travelling, and Spencer was hustled

into an automobile and whirled out to Minoru Park where an aeroplane awaited them. A mechanic was working at the engine, and young Deloro fretted at the delay. The lawyer donned an aviator's rig and gave Billy a leather coat, helmet, and gauntlets to don.

"I'm going to act as pilot this time," remarked Deloro, "and I'll shoot you over. I did a lot of flying in France, y'know, when I was in the Flying Corps." He made the latter observation to reassure Spencer, who was looking nervously at him.

Billy was strapped into the seat, and Deloro took his place at the controls. "We've just got sixty minutes to get from here to the office in Victoria," observed Deloro, and his utterance was drowned by the roar of the engine. The mechanic was aboard and in his seat, and the machine raced across the field, the planes were adjusted, and they left the ground. Spencer hung on apprehensively during the take-off and closed his eyes. He opened them slowly and looked gingerly around. The matter-of-fact manner of the lawyer and the mechanic reassured him, and he took heart.

Roaring aloft, the plane dwindled the city of Vancouver to a living chart of streets, buildings and green spaces, and Billy forgot his nervousness in the magnificent panorama which opened before his eyes. The peaks of the Coast Range serrated the horizon, and the silver tracings of the Fraser river delta overlaid the green of the land below them. Ahead lay the sea—shimmering in the sun—and the blue loom of the Vancouver Island mountains toward which they were speeding.

It was cold up aloft, and Billy shivered while the

rush of the wind almost caused him to gasp. The roar of the engine drowned all other sounds, and he sat still, deaf and dumb, but nevertheless thoroughly enjoying the exhilaration of the flight through the clear and unobstructed ether. "It ain't a skipper, nor an engine driver, I would be after this," he murmured. "This takes me to the fair, by Jupiter!"

Time was becoming precious, and Deloro was continually scanning his wrist watch. There was something ahead which was worrying him, and Spencer realized it when the plane plunged through a bank of foggy vapour. The sight of the earth was blotted out, and Deloro began to fidget. If it were foggy around Victoria, landing would be difficult, and more valuable time would be wasted. Billy was wondering if he had a foghorn and what blasts would be sounded in such a craft, and he humorously decided it would be the three honks of a running ship, when the fog thinned out and the land showed beneath.

They began to descend in dizzy spirals, and almost before Spencer was aware of it the plane straightened out and was bumping violently over a grassy sward. "Jump out now!" urged Deloro when the machine stopped. "We've got to run for the clubhouse yonder."

Without any ceremony, both men ran for the Golf Club pavilion near where they landed. Several golfers hailed the young lawyer, but shouting "Can't stop! Tell you the story in the Union Club to-night!" he bundled Billy into a waiting auto and gave the chauffeur directions to "drive like the devil and I'll pay the fines!"

Spencer had scarce regained his breath before

the car raced into the quiet city of Victoria and he was bundled out again into a building, up a flight of stairs, and into an office where several men were waiting.

Red faced, perspiring, and panting, young Deloro turned around and indicated Billy with a wave of his hand. "Gentlemen! Our client—Mr. William Ainslie Spencer—brother of the late James Winslow Spencer—and heir to his estate!" He glanced at his wrist-watch and added, "And, gentlemen, it is just three minutes to twelve. Our client is here in plenty of time!"

XII

Billy Spencer was back in Boston again within the fifteen days, and, as Lovell had prophesied, his reception was vastly different. The newspapers had got the story, and it furnished them with copy for a week's sensation, while Billy himself was heroized into the limelight from coast to coast—much to his alarm and distaste.

He slunk down to Lovell's office the morning he arrived back to dodge the news hounds and camera men who were trailing him, and he was waiting within when Old John came in.

"I cal'late I got to get a noo skipper for the *Alfarata* now?" the old fish dealer was saying.

"You have," replied Billy with a grin. "No more of that for me after this. I'm a-goin' to give up the fast life I've been livin' lately and settle down to peace and quietness. I'm now the owner of a salmon cannery, a sawmill, a fruit farm, and a block of timber limits in British Columbia——"

"And all you need to make it complete," interrupted the other slyly, "is a wife." Spencer

blushed. His expectant hearing had caught the sound of Miss Comstock's entrance, and he knew that she was within earshot. Old John always spoke at the top of his voice, anyway.

"Don't blush, man," boomed the fish dealer, with a twinkle in his eye. "Nothing to blush for. I'm sure I could fit you out with as trim a little girl as you'd meet anywhere, and I ain't sure but what she's took a bit of a shine to you, too."

Two young people on opposite sides to a glass partition were both considerably flustered, and the young woman, looking as sweet as a morning rose and momentarily just as red, started typewriting to cover her confusion. But good white paper was being spoiled with unintelligible sentences, and Billy was nervously trying to light the wrong end of a cigar.

"They call you Speedy Spencer," continued Lovell. "Now, I'd like to see a little speed in a certain direction——"

"Sh!" hissed Billy warningly, but the old man was out for fun and wasn't to be deterred by the other's red-faced scowl.

"Miss Comstock! Come here a minute, please!"

She came into the office somewhat nervously, and Spencer, fidgeting and apprehensive, was surprised by the change in her appearance. The summer sun, the vacation, and the removal of the trouble that had oppressed her, were all reflected in her face and manner, and Billy felt sure that he would never muster courage enough to make the proposal he had been contemplating for weeks past. She had the air and features of a girl beyond him, and all his hopes and aspirations oozed out through his boots.

Lovell cleared his throat, and the skipper wondered what was coming.

"Take a letter, please!"

Mabel sat down at the desk with notebook open and pencil poised. She had merely recognized Spencer's presence by a demure nod.

"Ahem!" Old Johnny began gravely.

"Mr. John Lovell, Fish Pier, Boston.

Dear Sir: I regret to inform you that I will be leaving your employ at the end of the month, as I am about to be married. Yours very truly——"

He paused and looked humorously at the agitated Spencer and then down on the girl who was holding her pencil in fingers that trembled. He continued: "Sign that letter 'Mabel Comstock!'"

With a great laugh at the rosy discomfiture of the young people in his office, Johnny reached for his hat and made for the door. "I'm a-goin' down to the dock for a while and I'll leave you two folks in charge. You don't need to answer the telephone unless you like, but I'm a-lookin' for a little speed on your part, Billy Spencer!" And he stamped outside, chuckling to himself.

Captain Billy turned from looking out of the window and stole a glance at the girl bending confusedly over her notebook. "Awful old feller, ain't he, miss?" he ventured.

Miss Comstock raised her eyes and they were smiling. "He certainly is," she replied shortly. She bent again to the notebook, and Billy wondered why she didn't rise and leave for the outer office. He shuffled his feet on the floor and thought of something to say. He wished to say a lot, but

his inspiration, resolution, and nerve had left him. Finally he blurted out :

“How’s your father this morning ? ”

“Coming along splendidly,” replied the girl happily. “He’ll soon be out and around, we hope.”

“Humph ! ” Billy was still floundering, but he was gradually obtaining control of his nerves. “Er—I—I was thinkin’—” he began and stopped as if appalled at the idea of airing his thoughts.

“You were thinking——” Mabel echoed encouragingly without looking up.

Spencer swallowed hard and made up his mind to take the bull by the horns.

“Yes, I was—er—thinkin’ that—that Old Johnny’s idea was a good one. Er—that letter, y’know—the one you jest took——” He paused, blushing and embarrassed, and gazed at her half fearfully. She looked wonderful to him at that moment—fascinatingly desirable—and a small insistent voice seemed to be coming to his rescue when it urged him in terms he could understand. “Now, then, Billy Spencer ! There’s a little clipper-built craft on your lee and she’s hauling ahead of you, Billy, she’s hauling ahead. Make sail, man, make sail ! Nothing was ever won by mothering canvas ! Away you go with all your muslin up and give her sheet ! ” That was the word—“Give her sheet ! ”—the old Bank fisherman’s “swinging-off” command, and he thought of the many times he had swung his vessel off with booms out, everything hoisted, and the wake a-roaring with white water. Her head was bowed over the notebook, and she was scribbling circles with her pencil. “Give her sheet ! ” said the voice within him, and he rose to the occasion.

Stepping across the office he bent down and took her hands within his great bronzed fists. She made no effort to take them away, and he bent over still farther until her silky brown hair brushed his cheeks.

"Mabel," he ventured boldly, "I've got all that junk out in British Columbia and I need a skipper to take charge. I'll ship as mate. Mabel, girl, will you be the skipper?"

When Johnny Lovell came barging into his private office, Billy Spencer was signed on for life's voyage under a new commander. Both skipper and mate were seated upon Lovell's roll-top desk, rapturously happy and absolutely oblivious to a continuously ringing telephone. Old John beamed benevolently over his glasses.

"Well, well, children," he boomed, with a laugh, "something tells me that Speedy Spencer is no more and that I'm losing a skipper and a stenographer. All that I can say now is the Lord help you, my children, the Lord help you!"

I

THE Decker's Island fishing schooner *Quickstep*, Thomas Decker, master and managing owner, was lying in to Souris, Prince Edward Island, in company with a fleet of Gloucestermen and Lunenburgers awaiting bait for the early spring fishing.

The *Quickstep* was making her first trip as a halibuter, Decker's enterprising spirit having been aroused in that particular mode of piscatorial effort by the big stocks made by some American vessels the previous season.

"If them Gloucestermen can go up around the Anticoast an' make four thousan' dollar stocks a-halibutin', I don't see no reason why the able *Quickstep* and her able Decker's Island gang can't git a grab on some o' the fish what's knockin' around the Gulf. I cal'late Tom Decker can catch halibut jest as easy as Peter Dunsy or Nat Greenleaf."

Thus had the skipper spoken, and the gang, who followed Decker in all things, stowed their haddocking gear away and essayed pleasanter tasks in rigging up hooks and lines for the capture of the wily halibut.

They sailed from Decker's Island on the 15th of April and arrived in Canso harbour three days later.

Here they met their first setback and lay to anchor for twelve days, unable to make a passage through the Straits owing to the spring ice blockading the North Bay.

It was Decker's intention to procure herring bait at the Magdalen Islands, but when the blockade of the Canso Straits was lifted the Government bulletins stated briefly that Amherst, Grindstone, and Grand Entry were still in the grip of the Ice King, but some bait was to be procured at Havre Bouche and Souris.

Seventeen days out from home, the *Quickstep* slid into the latter port, furling her weatherworn sails, and let go her rusty anchor.

The fitting out of a fishing vessel is paid for by all hands when the catch has been sold. In seventeen days a gang of nineteen men will consume a huge amount of food, especially at the rate of three square meals a day, with "mug-ups" between the regular repasts.

With nothing so far to offset seventeen days' expenses, Captain Decker was eager to begin fishing and overtake the indebtedness incurred by too healthy appetites.

The *Quickstep* had scarce wet her mudhook before a dory was over and her skipper ashore looking for bait.

However, Decker was not alone in the quest. Twenty fishing skippers with dollars in their pockets were scouring Souris on the same errand, and what few herrings there were, were quickly snapped up.

After loafing around the town until dusk Decker came aboard the schooner again very much disgusted.

"Herrin's scarcer than dollars around this here place," he remarked to the crowd down aft. "They ain't botherin' 'bout herrin' these days. It's all fox farmin'.

"I was talkin' with a feller ashore what uster run a big herrin' trap, an' he's done nawthin' but talk black fox t' me until I was sick of hearin' 'bout the cussed animals. Whenever I'd try to make a deal for his next haul o' bait he'd tell me 'bout the money he was a-goin' to make out o' some cussed fox farm what he had shares in.

"I cal'late I know all thar is to know 'bout them creeturs. An' what I don't know ye'll find in them blame prospectusses which was shoved inter me mitts in every dodgasted store in th' place."

And with an indignant snort he threw a dozen alluring promotion circulars on to the lockers and stamped on deck.

Like the measles, the black fox mania was catching, and the *Quickstep's* crowd heard so much about it around Souris during the time that they were there that forecastle conversation predominated with the tales of the fortunes made in the fox ranches of Prince Edward Island.

Parodying the words of a well-known vaudeville song, it was—

Fox for breakfast, fox for dinner, fox for supper-time. Halibuting was forgotten for the nonce.

"I was speakin' to a feller ashore thar," remarked big Billy Westhaver, "an' he told me that he put two hundred dollars inter one o' them fox ranches last year an' he's drawed out more'n six hundred dollars in interest already. That beats any fishin' I ever heard of——"

"Aye," interrupted John Morrissey. "They was a-tellin' me 'bout a feller what caught a fox over down th' Newf'n'land shore an' got twenty thousand dollars for it. It 'ud be 'most worth a feller's while to fit out a vessel an' go trappin' for them critters."

"There's lots o' them down in Newf'n'land," remarked another man. "The woods is full of 'em."

The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of the skipper, who had just come off.

"Any bait?" inquired a chorus of voices.

"Nary a sign," growled Decker. "Some bait reported at the Madaleens, but heavy open ice is everywhere, so that ain't a-goin' to do us much good. We'll wait over another day, and if we don't git somethin' we'll head to th' south'ard an' go a-fishin' down on Western Bank.

"This Gulf fishin' don't pay when ye're kept hangin' around for bait. Wonder when the Gulf ice is goin' to clear outter the North Bay an' give us a chanst to make the Islands?"

"Wal," remarked a man, "the one feller that sh'd know is the skipper o' the *Ensenada*, lyin' to loo'ard thar. He's a Newf'n'lander—name o' Bill Kittery—an' he's got the repytation o' bein' the first skipper to bait at the Madaleens for years back."

Decker grunted. "He ain't makin' no move. I was speakin' to him ashore thar, an' he told me thar was no chanst o' baitin' at the Madaleens for two weeks yet. Told me to hang around here for a spell, but sink me! if we stay around here much longer it'll be fox ranchin' we'll be goin' 'stead o' fishin'!"

And he absently emptied his pockets of another wad of fox farming literature.

Early next morning some peculiar instinct prompted Decker to tumble out of his bunk and take a look around on deck.

It was high water and black dark, but as he pulled on his "stags" he fancied he heard the clink of a vessel's windlass.

"Oho!" he muttered. "Some feller makin' a shift. Let's see who it is."

Down to leeward he made out a schooner with her mainsail up and her gang quietly windlassing the anchor to the bows. It was a suspicious quiet, and Decker smiled.

"Oho!" he muttered again. "The *Ensenada's* makin' a move! Bill Kittery—the first man to bait at the Madaleens every season! Bill's an old ice-pilot, an' he's shapin' for the Islands or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Wal, if he kin do it, I cal'late I can, especially if thar's a good pilot ahead o' me!"

And with a weatherwise glance at the sky, he strode forward and shouted down the fo'c'sle scuttle:

"Oh, below! All out an' git under way!"

Fifteen minutes later the *Quickstep*, under four lowers, was following in the wake of the Newfoundland schooner. Decker, at the wheel of his own craft, steered and puffed at his pipe deep in thought.

"Now," he murmured in a trick he had of putting himself for the nonce in the other fellow's position, "if I was him I'd git sore at bein' foltered, an' when it come dark I'd dodge the man

in my wake. He's got all this ice game figured out, an' he knows whar he'll find the soft spots and the open leads.

"I can foller him during daylight, but I may lose him at night. He's a-goin' to the Madaleens all right, an' if I stick to him, no matter what course he steers, I'll get thar."

After a lengthy rumination he handed the wheel over to the watch, with strict instructions to follow the vessel ahead.

During the afternoon they met with a lot of broken ice floating to the eastward, and just before supper the lookout at the *Quickstep's* foremasthead sighted a solid field to the north.

The *Ensenada* had sighted it too, and she came about and ran down toward the *Quickstep*.

"Ye'd better run back for Souris, skipper!" bawled a figure at the Newfoundlander's wheel. "That ice is too solid for a vessel to buck. We'll need a strong westerly afore we kin make the Madaleens."

"Thank ye!" roared Decker. "I cal-late I'll take yer advice. Mainsheet! Stand by for stays! Helm's a lee!"

"Give ye a hook for Souris, cap!" bawled the Newfoundlander. "I cal'late I can trim ye!" And as he spoke the big fisherman's staysail was sent aloft.

The *Quickstep's* reply to the challenge consisted in setting staysail and balloon jib, and pitching and tearing through the lumpy sea, both schooners raced side by side a scant half mile apart.

"He's a slick article," laughed Decker grimly. "He ain't headin' for Souris—not by a long chalk. Soon as it comes dark he'll shake us and head

north again. Jest watch him shakin' his luff an' spillin' wind so's we can overhaul him."

When the darkness shut down upon the sea the *Ensenada* was far astern. Decker put the wheel down on the *Quickstep* and came about.

"She ain't showin' her side lights," he remarked to the gang lounging aft. "Neither will we. Now keep a double lookout for'ard an' let two of ye spell one another aloft on that fore-m'sthead. I'm for chasin' him again."

With a fresh westerly blowing, the schooner, under four lowers, stormed through the night, with the lookout signalling the presence of drifting slabs of ice.

It was risky work driving a vessel amid these floating hazards, but Decker trusted the eyes of the men forward and had confidence in the quick handling of his schooner to avoid a serious mishap.

At midnight Bill Westhaver, from the mast-head, hailed the deck. "Vessel ahead!"

"That's him," murmured Decker with a laugh. "I guessed he'd fetch to the west-ard. He's plannin' to skirt that field of ice.

"Wal, boys, we'll hang to him. He can't run away from the *Quickstep*."

And throughout the night they steered in the *Ensenada's* wake, with the wily Decker at the wheel threading the vessel through the open lanes in the ice-field.

Sunrise revealed an open sea, with here and there a small patch of dazzling white flecking the blue expanse of water. Two miles ahead the *Ensenada* was tearing along under all sail, and the tired skipper relinquished the wheel he had held for twelve long hours.

"Follow him," he croaked, "and call me jest as soon's ye sight land!"

During the afternoon the weather changed and a heavy, misty rain shut down. In the obscurity the *Ensenada* vanished from the sight of the watchers on the *Quickstep*, and Decker for once was in a quandary.

In following the other craft he had omitted to keep the run of his own vessel, and in consequence had only a very hazy idea of his position. The watch, as usual, left all the navigation of the vessel to the skipper, and had but a dim notion of the direction in which the *Ensenada* was steering when the fog closed in.

"Sink me!" growled Decker savagely. "Thar ain't one o' ye that can be trusted to do anythin' on yer own hook. I got to be on deck all the time. Consarn ye, ye've gone an' lost her, an' ye can't tell me how she was headin' when it shut down thick——"

"Wal, she was by the wind when I saw her last," vouchsafed the man who had the wheel.

Decker glanced in the binnacle.

"By the wind, be damned!" he snapped. "The blame' wind has shifted since, an' that don't tell me nawthin'. A damned fine mess we're in now. The Madaleens can be anywheres for all I know. . . . What's that?" He paused suddenly and listened.

"Steamer whistlin' off to starboard!"

Decker grabbed the wheel and spoked it over.

"Slack away sheets fore and aft," he cried, "an' keep a lookout for that steamer!"

Running down the wind, the *Quickstep* headed

in the direction of the blasts, and within a few minutes the white hull and yellow funnel of a handsome yachtlike vessel emerged from the mist close aboard.

"The Government ice-breaker!" cried Decker gleefully, as he put the wheel down.

The steamer was forging across the fishing schooner's bows at a ten-knot clip when the skipper hailed.

"Where are we?" he inquired.

"Ten miles south by east of Entry Island!" bawled a lusty voice through a megaphone. Before the ice-breaker had vanished in the mist the *Quickstep* was around on her heel and heading north by west, with the log over the taffrail.

"Decker's luck!" murmured the gang. "He's like a cat—allus falls on his feet!"

II

It was thick as mud that evening when the *Quickstep* crawled into Pleasant Bay and silently dropped anchor off Amherst.

The *Ensenada* was not to be seen, though no doubt she was at anchor somewhere in the Bay.

"Keep the mains'l on her an' don't make any noise," cautioned Decker. "If that Newf'n'lander's hereabouts, thar's no use in lettin' him know we're here. Get a dory over an' pull me ashore. Bill, Jim, and Erne had better come along o' me, but let the rest o' ye stay aboard."

With oars muffled in the thole pins by old mittens lashed around them, the dory pulled quietly in the direction of the straggling village, and when the beach emerged from the mist Decker avoided

the usual landing place and ran the boat in on the shore to the right of the wharf.

"Bill Kittery'll likely be ashore, an' his dories'll be at th' wharf," he muttered. "We don't want to meet his gang. There may be trouble, so you fellers foller me up to th' telegraph office. If anythin' sh'd happen, watch me and act quick. I'm out to git that bait or bust!"

Walking up the main street of the little Island settlement, the *Quickstep's* men headed in the direction of the telegraph office with some degree of nervousness. If the Newfoundlanders caught them, hostilities were likely to ensue.

Men with reputations for smart work and ability in the fishing fleets are jealous of them, and the *Ensenada's* crowd was celebrated as the pioneer of the Magdalen Island spring baitings. To be followed by the *Quickstep* was an insult, and scarcely tended to promote cordial relations.

Amherst was a place where strangers were quickly spotted, and they had scarce gone a hundred feet before one of the inhabitants stopped Decker.

"*Comment ça va, m'sieur?* Ba gosh, I guess you'se de first vessel for come to de Madaleens dis spring. You're de——"

"*Ensenada* of Grand Bank," lied the skipper glibly.

"Newf'n'lan' vessel," said the other. "Ba gosh, I t'ought so. I t'ought me I see dat Beel Kittery pass on de wharf two t'ree minute ago. Dees de secon' tam you'se ben firs' vessel for Madaleens. Much ice you meet outside, *hein?*"

"Quite a jag," answered Decker coolly. "Any herrin' strikin' in yet?"

"None at dees place. Might be some at Etang du Nord, or Grindstone. Maybe Joe Tetrault at Cap All Right git some. Hees trap ben set two t'ree day now. You find out at de telegraph office. *Bon soir, m'sieur!* Good luck!"

"So Bill Kittery's ashore, an' up at th' telegraph office, I'll be bound," murmured Decker when the stranger had gone on. "Humph!" And while passing a pile of lobster crates he picked up a small coil of rope and thrust it under his sweater.

"What are ye swipin' that bit o' junk for, skipper?" inquired Westhaver with a laugh. "Surely ye ain't plannin' to fit out the *Quickstep* with odds an' ends o' gear picked up on th' beach——"

"Shut yer ugly head an' don't ask questions," snapped Decker in reply. "Keep close to me, an' if ye're stopped, let me do th' talkin'."

The village seemed devoid of life, save in the local stores, where through the windows the *Quickstep's* men could see members of the *Ensenada's* crew holding a levee around the stoves, surrounded by a crowd of Islanders eager for news of the outside world. Hemmed in by ice for four solid months, the inhabitants of the Magdalens welcome the arrivals of the fishing fleet in the spring, and the crews are besieged for information.

Leaving the village, the quartette made their way up the hill to the telegraph station, and after a hasty reconnaissance Decker stationed his companions outside the gate.

"Stay here—Kittery's inside the office," he muttered. "Him an' me'll likely have words. When I come out, don't let him see ye, but stand by for squalls."

And with this cryptic utterance he entered the building.

Captain William Kittery was engaged in conversation with the telegraph operator when Decker entered. At the sight of the stocky Nova Scotian the big Newfoundlander started.

"So you got here, did ye?" he growled resentfully.

The other smiled pleasantly. "Yes, Cap'n Kittery, I managed to make it all right. Nasty lot of ice outside, wasn't there? And how's chances for bait?"

"Thar ain't none," snapped the Newfoundlander quickly, and instinctively Decker knew he was lying.

Addressing the operator, Decker repeated the question. "Any bait reported, mister?"

"Well, yes," answered the man. "There isn't any here, but over at——"

"Don't tell him!" interrupted Kittery.

"Oh, but he must," insisted the *Quickstep's* skipper quietly. "Information regardin' bait supply is a Government affair, an' I cal'late this gentleman knows his business. Thar ain't no cod-hauler from the Starvation Shore a-goin' to collar all the bait in the Madaleens. If thar's any in th' traps around here we'll both git a bid for it. Where did ye say that herrin' was, mister?"

The operator looked at a carbon copy of his last report. "Cape All Right has enough held in the traps to bait one vessel. There's none reported anywhere else."

"I thank ye kindly, mister," said Decker politely. "I cal'late I'll get over thar in th' mornin'. Good night, sir. Good night, Cap'n Kittery."

The *Ensenada's* skipper seemed taken aback at Decker's calm assurance, and he swung unceremoniously through the door after the other.

"Say, you!" he growled, grabbing Decker by the arm when they got outside the house. "You've got a h— of a nerve, ain't you? I got here fust, an' I cal'late that bait's mine."

The other laughed derisively. "Yours? Wal, I like yer blame gall! *Your* bait? Holy Sailor! You ain't selfish at all, are ye now?"

While replying he had walked out through the gate and stopped in the middle of the road. It was pitch dark; a misty rain was falling, and the telegraph office was a hundred yards away.

Decker edged over toward some bushes, and the other followed him.

"Say, Decker," rumbled the Newfoundlander menacingly, "I'm out to git that bait over to All Right, an' you ain't a-goin' to stop me. We'll settle this here matter right now——"

"Sure we will!" yelled Decker, with a sudden swing of his stocky body.

"*Smack!*"

His right fist caught Kittery on the peak of the jaw, and the big fellow ground out an oath and lunged for his smaller opponent with a growl like an enraged bear.

The blow never got home, however, and before the *Ensenada's* skipper could rightly figure out what had happened to him he was gagged and bound hand and foot in several fathoms of stout lobster rope.

"What'll we do with him?" whispered big Bill Westhaver, sucking the blood off his skinned knuckles.

"Carry him over to that barn thar," ordered Decker, panting with his exertions. "He'll be all right in thar. They'll find him when they come to milk th' cows in th' mornin'."

And in the darkness of the rain-swept night they lugged the squirming Kittery over to the barn and thrust him inside.

Striking a match, Decker spied a vacant stall between two miserable specimens of bovine quadrupeds, and with a grim chuckle he dragged Kittery into it and clamped the wooden head-stall over his head.

"Give him a leettle hay," laughed Morrissey. "He's in for the night. Lord Harry, but this is th' richest thing I've struck for a dog's age!"

And convulsed with mirth, the four conspirators closed the door and made for the beach.

"Oh, Lord, this'll kill me!" cried Decker, rolling around in the stern of the dory. "Ha! ha! ha! *What* a story for the boys to home! Puttin' his neck in that there head-stall was th' finishin' touch! A real neat, shipshape job! Jupiter, if I ever meet him again the feathers'll fly!"

"Lord Harry, Skip, but you're a hound!" chuckled Westhaver, tugging at his oars. "A man what sails with you is gittin' some pleasure out o' life. Jumpin' Cat-footed Jupiter! I think I'll bust laffin' over this night's work!"

Tumbling aboard the *Quickstep* a few minutes later, Decker turned the gang out to get the anchor and hoist sail.

"We got t' git over to All Right an' git that bait aboard afore that cod-hauler gits out. His gang may start s'archin' for him, an' if he catches

us there'll be h— to pay an' no pitch hot. Any idea whar she's a lyin' ? ”

“ Aye ! Down to loo'ard thar,” answered a man. “ She was burnin' a torch a while ago——”

“ Good enough ! ” said Decker. “ We won't go near her. Git under way now, an' don't make too much noise. Quiet's the word.”

In the grey, mist-enshrouded night sail and anchor were hoisted, and the *Quickstep* slid through the black water for All Right, some four or five miles away. Making their way by soundings, they arrived off the Cape by midnight and came to an anchor.

“ I cal'late we've fetched about abreast of the traps,” said the skipper. “ Now git a dory out an' pull me ashore. I'll git them herrin' to-night, for I've a kinder notion that Bill Kittery'll eat his way loose afore daylight an' be after us.”

The details which led to Decker's procuring the required bait need not be enumerated here. Suffice to say he located the trap owner, roused him out of bed, and after spinning a wonderful fairy tale induced Tetrault and his two assistants to go off to the trap.

In the dark of the early morning the *Quickstep's* dories, with torches aflame on their gunwales, were loaded to the risings with gleaming, wriggling herring.

And with nine dory loads of the fish filling the deck pens the anchor was windlassed up and the *Quickstep* standing out to sea again within three hours from the time they arrived.

Slipping out to the eastward in the fog with lights doused, they almost crashed into a shadowy shape which seemed to loom up under their bows.

"Hard up! Hard up!" roared Westhaver, who was on the lookout, and quicker than thought the skipper leaped to the wheel and spun it over.

The booms came across the decks and fetched up on the jibing gear with a crash, and the *Quickstep's* mainboom swept over the taffrail of the stranger.

"You clumsy blankety blank sweep!" roared a voice which Decker recognized as Bill Kittery's, and following the oaths came a hail for a gun to be passed up from the cabin.

"Look out!" shouted Decker, dropping to the deck.

Bang! Bang!

Two flashes snapped in the mist off the *Quickstep's* port quarter, and a hail of buckshot snipped little pieces of wood from the oak rail above the crouching Decker's head.

"Holy Trawler! But he's a savage son of a gun!" he growled. "Them was meant for me! Jupiter!"—as the snapping of canvas and the jiggling of shackles and blocks sounded in the smother—"He's plannin' to chase us! What a mean-spirited joker that Kittery is!"

"Hey ye go, fellers! Git yer stays'l an' balloon on her! Look alive now, or there'll be murder done!"

The *Ensenada* had come around on her heel, and out of the gloom on the *Quickstep's* quarter Decker could hear the souse and crash of the pursuing schooner's bow-wave.

"Away ye go on that stays'l!" he bawled anxiously. "Sheet down yer lee balloon sheet. All hands aft here an' git yer mains'l trimmed. Git this packet by the wind, an' I'll give anythin'

whittled out o' wood a mile o' start an' beat her in five knots. Loose yer fore an' main tops'ls. He'll certainly have to travel some to ketch Tom Decker when th' *Quickstep's* got her kites flyin' an' her sheets flat aft."

Under the press of sail the able schooner drew ahead of the *Ensenada*, which lacked the advantages of a foretopmast to set a balloon jib and foretopsail. With a harmless parting broadside from the shotgun the Newfoundlander vanished into the darkness astern.

"What a bloody-minded beggar that Kittery is!" remarked a man, wiping the perspiration off his face.

"Aye," answered Decker musingly. "They's some awful rough men goes a fishin'. Ain't got no gentlem'nly instinks at all. That feller 'ud ha' shot me ef I hadn't ha' ducked.

"Rough, onmannerly an' can't take a joke no-how—that's Kittery. His gang must ha' s'arched for him soon after we left.

"Now, fellers, set the watch and let her go about no'th. Call me when ye sight Brion Island or the Bird Rocks."

III

The *Quickstep's* gang made their first set in the shoal water to the west of Heath Point Light, Anticosti Island, and got a "skunk" haul.

From Heath Point to West Point they dipped the gear in shoal and deep water and failed to secure anything but a few scattering halibut—hardly enough to pay for the bait used. The few halibuters they spoke on the coast had the same tale.

"Nawthin' doin' ! Where's the fish ? "

"A month out an' nawthin' in th' hold," growled the gang, and in the manner of fishermen they cursed the skipper for his inability to strike fish.

"Decker's makin' a broker o' this halibutin' game," they said. "His luck's deserted him."

The skipper heard the comments, smiled saturninely and said nothing.

Came a day when a heavy breeze from the southward sent the schooner flying for a lee to the north shore of the Island.

There are no harbours on the Anticosti except Ellis Bay, and it is the custom of fishermen to dodge around the Island when it breezes up heavy.

The *Quickstep* swung around Heath Point and headed up the north shore coast as far as Cape Observation. Here they made a set in hundred fathom water, and, buoying the gear, ran inshore and anchored early in the afternoon.

Westhaver and another man hoisted a dory over and pulled ashore for a ramble around the woods which fringed the coast. The others, with a hard luck grouch still upon them, stayed aboard and speculated on the chances of finding fish on the morrow.

"A whole litter o' them ! Black as the ace o' spades, I tell ye ! "

Westhaver's voice, shrill with excitement, disturbed the monotony of the growling gossip in the forecandle, and the gang pricked up their ears.

"What's that big galoot talkin' about ? Has he seen a bear ? " bawled Decker, who was having a mug-up at the shack locker.

"What's the racket, Bill ? "

Westhaver clattered down into the forecandle, and his eyes were wide with excitement.

"Black foxes! A whole blame' school o' them."

"Where?" roared a dozen voices at once.

"Ashore thar. By the edge o' the woods. Me'n Jake seen them. Black as the inside o' a tar-pot. We saw 'em just after we'd beached the dory. Jake's ashore watchin' the hole they ducked into, an' I come off like greased lightnin' for some o' youse fellers to help ketch them. Jupiter! If we can it'll be mainsheet for home, an' devil the trawl I'll haul from now 'til I'm planted for good!"

"How'n blazes are we goin' to git them?" growled a man. "Thar ain't no traps or a gun aboard o' this packet——"

"Bait some hooks with meat an' set it outside their hole," suggested one.

"Th' man what springs sich a brilliant idea as that," said Decker, "sh'd be cut up inter th' bait fur them hooks."

"Stand by the hole an' grab them when they come out," vouchsafed another.

"Ye're strong on standin' a long watch, Artie, boy," remarked the skipper sarcastically. "I might suggest that Skinny Jim go'n crawl in the hole after them. It 'ud just be as good.

"No, fellers, a fox is a fox, an' none o' them brilliant plans'll work in ketchin' foxes——"

"Then what do *you* plan on doin'?" inquired the crowd eagerly.

"Dig 'em out!"

"Where's yer spades? This is a vessel—not a farm."

"Cook's shovel, ice-picks an' ice-shovels, bait-knives and yer hands," said the skipper tersely. "Go'n git 'em, an' we'll have a try for Bill's foxes."

In five minutes the required articles were found, and every man of the *Quickstep's* gang tumbled into the dories and pulled for the beach.

"Jest think of it!" someone was saying as he bent to an oar. "Th' blame' critters are worth from ten to twenty thousand dollars *apiece*! Lord Harry, if we kin cotch this bunch we'll be able to ride in autymobiles. Say we git two o' them. That'll mean 'bout thirty thousand dollars—makin' a share of nigh fifteen hundred *apiece*——"

"Jumpin' Jupiter! It beats any highline share I ever heard of. Quick's th' word, 'case that crazy Jake lets 'em get loose!"

Beaching the dories, the crowd scrambled ashore and ran hot-foot to where the excited Jake was keeping apprehensive guard over a hole in the moss-and-gravel bank which fringed the beach above tide water mark.

"How many is they?" whispered the gang.

"One she-fox an' three young 'uns was what me'n Bill seed. They was a playin' cute's ye please outside that there log when we come along. Then all o' them nipped into this here hole."

Without saying anything Decker made a survey of the ground in the vicinity of the burrow, and ruminated to himself in the habit peculiar to his character:

"If I was a fox—an' foxes has the name o' bein' foxy—I'd have more'n one door to my hang-out. Mr. Black Fox is sure to have a back door to skin out by, and I cal'late we'll find it afore we start diggin'."

He was soon justified in his surmise and found another hole under the roots of a stunted moss hung spruce.

Stooping down, he examined something lying on the earth.

"Um! Fish bones," he muttered, "an' fresh. This is his back door, sure enough. Now, to git them."

A smoke fire of wet grass and pitch was kindled at the hole which faced seaward, and leaving a guard to tend the fire, the others started spelling each other with shovels, axes, ice-picks, and windlass spikes in digging out the burrow from the rear entrance.

With the fortunes of the Prince Edward Island fox farmers as an incentive, every man worked double tides and the earth simply flew. Those who were supposed to be having a spell from the labour scraped the dirt away with their hands in their eagerness to get at the furry wealth.

Hour after hour passed, and the toiling fishermen remained at their task. Darkness came down upon the deserted, almost unknown, coast, and with numerous kerosene torches flaring on the sod the men worked at the "digging out" by their flickering light without a thought of knocking off.

If some of them had only put as much spade work into their farms at home they'd never have needed to go fishing for a living.

By midnight they had reached within a hundred feet of the fire-guarded entrance. Tommy Coulson and his dory-mate had just straightened their backs preparatory to another attack upon the spongy peatlike earth, when with a yelping snarl a black streak shot from out of the trench and through the legs of the men.

"Cotch him!" screamed Colson, throwing his body after the fleeing animal.

A fusillade of picks, spades, spikes, clods, and oaths were hurled into the darkness and men fell over each other and the kerosene flares in their anxiety to grab the escaping fortune.

"Sink, swamp, bust an' blast me!" snapped Decker when the men sheepishly picked themselves and their tools up. "A h— of a bunch of handless, eyeless, an' useless swabs you are! Ye've let twenty thousan' dollars git away from ye. D'ye hear? Thirty thousan' dollars! Forty thousan' dollars, by Jupiter! Jest waitin' to be cotched by the grab of a hand!"

After listening to the skipper's tongue-lashing, the men bent to the work again in the hope that the pups were still in the hole. So gingerly was the earth removed and so close did the trawlers cuddle the burrow that a beetle could not have escaped them.

Their efforts were rewarded at last, and held out to the inspection of the rapturous trawlers were three pitifully yelping little balls of black fur.

"Ten thousan' bucks apiece!" said Decker triumphantly. "Thirty thousand dollars! Git back to the vessel, boys. It's mainsheet for Souris and a fox market. Th' halibut kin go to—to Bill Kittery——"

"Naw!" cried a strident voice behind him. "We'll jest change that little remark, Tommy Decker. Put up yer hands, you blame' dog-fish, or I'll send you whar ye're sendin' th' halibut!"

And the skipper and the *Quickstep's* crew turned to look into the menacing muzzles of two shotguns and a rifle held in the steady hands of three of the *Ensenada's* men.

In the glare of the torches Decker noticed that they were surrounded by the Newfoundlander's gang, and every man was armed with belaying-pin, windlass bar, or ice-pick.

"Yes!" continued Kittery, levelling his gun at Decker's head. "You're all-fired smart, ain't ye? Stole my bait at th' Madaleens an' played a little game with me down to Amherst.

"Wal, my bucko, it's *my* deal now, an' I cal'late I'm agoin' to rake in a big jackpot. Hand them blame' critters over, or I'll blow yer ugly head off!"

Decker was a young man, resourceful and nervy. The suddenness of the holdup knocked his ideas galley-west for the nonce, and for once he was at a loss what to do under the circumstances.

He was not afraid of the guns, even though he was well aware that Kittery would not hesitate to shoot—if not to kill, at least to maim; so he stalled for time to think.

"Yes, Bill, I cal'late you're top dog now," he said with a quick glance at his own gang gathered around him. "'Spose we let our differences pass an' make a deal. We'll half up on th' foxes——"

"Half up be cussed!" snapped the other. "Hand them over naow, you fellers, or we'll plug yez!"

"No ye don't!" cried Decker. "Half an' half, or we'll twist th' necks o' th' critters right here—shoot or no shoot. I'll choke the one I got——"

"Try it an' I'll choke *you*!" roared the Newfoundlander menacingly. "You choke, I'll shoot, by Judas! Hand 'em over, naow, an' no more shenanigan. Go ahead, boys, an' take th' critters from them three fellers——"

A number of the *Ensenada's* crew advanced on

the knot of nineteen men gathered around Decker, and the action commenced.

"Let them foxes go, fellers!" bawled Decker, and he tossed the little pup he held in his hand into the burrow. The other two obeyed the skipper and threw the foxes down.

What happened next could only be compared to a football scrimmage. As soon as the little animals were tossed on the ground they nipped into the hole as quick as a flash, and the *Ensenada's* gang fell over one another in a vain attempt to grab the valuable captives.

"Watch the other hole!" almost screamed Kittery, making a rush for the other end of the burrow. "Quick, or they'll be gone!"

And in the glare from the torches a mob of men wrestled and rolled on the turf, actuated by opposing desires.

"To yer dories, fellers!" shouted Decker, leading the way to the water's edge. "Never mind them foxes. Come on!"

"Dories be swamped!" growled big Westhaver. "We'll make a fight o' this! Come on, bullies, let's lick th' tar out o' this bunch o' Newfys——"

"To th' dories! Th' dories!" yelled the skipper. "Let them hev th' foxes. Dories, I tell ye!" And with minds obsessed by wonder and rage, the *Quickstep's* crowd ran for the beach.

They were not pursued. The other gang were too busy with the foxes to bother about chasing Decker and his crowd—in fact, they were rather pleased to see them go, abandoning torches and digging utensils.

At the water's edge Westhaver and a few of the men started to volley questions at their skipper.

“What d’ye mean by heavin’ them critters away like that? What d’ye mean by lettin’ that bunch bluff ye outa fortune? What d’ye mean by——”

“Never mind askin’ foolish questions,” snapped Decker. “It’ll pan out all right if ye’ll obey orders. Here’s our four dories, an’ there’s four o’ theirs. Quick, now, tumble in! Grab their dories! Look sharp, now, an’ git them off——”

A light seemed to have penetrated every man’s brain, and quick as thought they separated, rushed for the *Ensenada’s* dories and pushed them off.

Wading knee-deep in the surf, excited men lugged the eight boats off the beach, and, tumbling aboard, shipped the oars and pulled like Trojans through the breakers. Never was there such exciting work as when the light, cranky boats tumbled through the surf in the darkness, shipping water and cannoning into one another as the crews tugged at the oars and almost screamed with the humour of the thing.

“Ha! ha! ha!” boomed Westhaver, pulling with Decker in one of the *Ensenada’s* dories. “Marooned th’ whole gang o’ them, by Jupiter! Whe-e-e! Ha! ha! ha! And thar ain’t another blame’ boat on this whole coast from here to Fox Bay—’most forty or fifty mile. Ain’t a house or a human soul or nawthin’ for miles an’ miles!”

“Fox Bay’s th’ nearest settlement an’ it’s fifty miles away an’ th’ hardest kind o’ walkin’—cliffs an’ swamps an’ thick bush——”

“Nawthin’ to eat!” chuckled Decker. “Every man jack o’ them came ashore to trim us. Thar’s their vessel lying on our starb’d—a mile off-shore, too far for a swim. I cal’late we got them jammed in a clinch now.

"We'll pull back in th' mornin' an' do a little dickerin', eh? An' maybe we'll git our foxes back.

"Aye, aye, thar's more ways o' killin' a cat than chokin' it with butter. Hah?"

It was long after midnight when the uproariously mirthful gang got aboard of the *Quickstep*. Decker took the precaution of boarding the *Ensenada*, and as he surmised found no one but the ship's cat upon her.

"They're safe ashore thar an' they can't git off ontill we let them," he remarked to his faithful henchman, Westhaver. "None o' them c'd swim out this far—not in this cold water.

"We've got them poke-hooked, by Jupiter, and if they've cotched our foxes again, which I reckon they have, we'll git them back for the privilege o' loanin' them a dory. Now, what d'ye say to havin' a mug-up? It's sure bin an excitin' evenin'!"

Daylight found all hands awake—none of them had turned in anyway—and gazing toward the beach. Decker had his binoculars, and issued the official communiqués.

"They're all settin' around a fire under the bank. I cal'late they're wishin' the cook was singin' out 'Breakfust!' jest about now.

"Wal, I cal'late, we won't bother them for a spell. Git under way, boys. We'll haul our gear an' see what we've got on the hooks, then we'll git ready fur a dicker to-night——"

"Ain't no chanst o' them Newfys buildin' a raft, Skip?" queried a man anxiously. "They've got our axes ashore thar."

"But they ain't got nails nor rope—though they might make a try. If they knew enough they'd heat up them windless spikes an' bore th' holes for

trunnels an' make a raft that way. It 'ud take them a long time an' they'd have to wait for a smooth day to git through that surf. No! I ain't worryin' much. We'll haul our gear an' run in again this afternoon."

None of the men particularly cared whether they got halibut or not that day, but by a strange irony of Fate all of the eight dories loaded up with fish before half a skate of gear had been hauled. It was "oars up" all along the line, and Decker and the spare hand had the busiest morning picking up the dories and unloading them since the *Quickstep* made the grounds.

"Jeerusalem!" said the skipper, his fisherman's instincts predominating. "I believe we're goin' to git a deck on this haul. Loaded up already, an' they've hardly started to haul the gear! We've struck th' school comin' inshore all right. Wal, fish first—foxes afterward!"

At three in the afternoon the gear was all hauled and the dories aboard and nested. Littering the *Quickstep's* checkered decks were fully thirty thousand pounds of the great flat fish, and while the delighted trawlers cleaned and blooded the catch, Decker steered the schooner inshore again.

"Leave yer mains'l up, boys," he said after rounding the vessel to the wind. "Leggo yer anchor. One o' ye go over to the Newf'n'lander and git some ice-picks an' shovels. Dress down that deck o' fish while Bill, Erne, Jim, an' me go ashore, and make a dicker for them foxes. Get me up some grub, cook."

After placing a parcel of food into the dory, the four piled in and pulled leisurely toward the beach.

"We'll lay off a bit an' palaver," said Decker. "I'll heave them this bit of grub—What in the Sam Hill! 'Vast rowin' there!"

The skipper rapped the words out suddenly, and the men fetched the dory to a stop and gazed apprehensively over their shoulders.

"What's th' row, skip?"

"I—I clean forgot all about their guns. Jupiter! we can't go nowheres near them. Hand me them glasses, Erne. What th' dickens are they doin' ashore thar?" asked Decker.

As he stared inshore, Decker's face was a study in expressions. The exultant look had faded and one of intense disgust had taken its place on his swarthy countenance.

"They've got me dished!" he growled savagely. "They don't need no grub. I can make out a couple o' deer hangin' up on a tree, an' the crowd o' them are buildin' a raft."

"Wal, an' what's the matter? Ain't you goin' to make a dicker for them foxes?" said Westhaver.

"How kin I, you lunk-head?" snapped the other. "We ain't got nawthin' on them. They've got deer meat a plenty, an' they'll have that raft ready to put off soon's the sea eases up; an' best of all they got guns an' we ain't. We can't stop 'em nohow, an' if we attempted to go near them we'd git plugged sure."

"I cal'late them foxes belongs to them. Come about! We'll get back to th' *Quickstep*!"

As they rounded the dory a bullet whined past them, followed by a muffled report from the shore. Morrissey's growls were choked in his throat and he laid to his oars with a gusto which would have done credit to the stroke of a college eight.

They swung the dory into the nest again with loud-voiced comments on what the gang were pleased to designate as their skipper's blunder.

"We sh'd have kep' them foxes an' made a fight for it," they growled. "Now, we'll have to clear off'n this coast soon's Kittery an' his gang gits on their vessel. They've got thirty thousand dollars in them animiles an' all's we got is a skunk thirty thousand o' halibut an' over a month gittin' them."

And while Decker was below in the cabin the men finished dressing the fish and cursed the skipper.

After supper—a silent meal while the skipper was at the table—and painfully critical when he left, the saturnine Decker had a dory hoisted over the rail, and getting into it alone, he pulled in the direction of the Newfoundland schooner.

It was dark when he returned, and without explaining the object of his excursion to anyone, he strode to his bunk and turned in.

At three in the morning he crawled out on deck and glanced thoughtfully around.

"Um ! Good breeze yet, but liable to shift soon. They'll hev that raft launched to-day when the wind hauls southerly. Um !"

Striding forward, he shouted sharply down the scuttle. "All out an' git under way !"

Before the sun rose over the wooded cliffs of Anticosti, the *Quickstep* was standing out to sea with her skipper at the wheel.

"Will we start an' bait up our gear ?" grunted Westhaver surlily.

"No !" replied Decker shortly. "We ain't got time to make the set, though I'll bet we'd git all th'

fish we want. The *Ensenada's* gang'll git aboard to-day an' then this coast won't hold both of us——"

"What are ye plannin' to do?" growled Westhaver. "Y'ain't makin' for home, with this skunk trip o' thirty thousand aboard, are ye? We've struck fish now, an' if we don't make a set to-day we'll maybe find them gone t'-morrer."

"We'll git some fish to-day, anyway," vouchsafed the skipper grimly. "Let one o' you go aloft an' keep a look-out for a watch-buoy that lays somewheres off here——"

"Whose watch-buoy, skipper?"

"The *Ensenada's*. Her gear is all out somewheres around, and if it's in the deep water there'll be some fish on it sure. It's been two days on the bottom and we'll pick it up an' haul it——"

"That's a mean game, skip! Haulin' another man's trawl——"

"It's a mean game in some cases," answered Decker, "but not in this. With our foxes in his possession, Kittery won't stop to bother haulin' that gear. He'll be in sich a hurry to sell them valuable animals that he won't care a cuss whether we take his fish or not. We got to go home with a trip, an' circumstances make it necessary that we under-run Mister Kittery's gear. What's that I see to wind'ard thar?"

"The *Ensenada's* watch-buoy, sure enough!"

"All right! Git ready to lower away top dories! We've lost the foxes, but we'll take Bill Kittery's halibut to pay for them!"

Decker's (?) halibut haul off the Anticosti North Shore is still a matter of history among the Atlantic trawlers.

Sixty dory-loads of prime fish were discharged on

the *Quickstep's* decks from off the hooks of the Newfoundlander's gear, and with an anxious eye to the westward Decker steered his schooner to the swamping dories and assisted the cook and spare hand in unloading them.

Sixty dory-loads meant full decks from windlass bitts to taffrail—sixty thousand pounds of fish to gut, blood and clean; but when the weary gang crawled aboard at sundown, the work before them—a herculean task—failed to dismay their good spirits.

“Not so bad after all,” chuckled Decker. “We lost our foxes, but we got a nice trip o’ fish—a regular high-line trip. Ninety thousand o’ halibut ain’t bad for five weeks out.

“Kittery won’t care a cuss about his gear. I cal’late he won’t bother to pick it up; he’ll be in such a hurry to grab th’ cash fur them fox critters he swiped from us.

“Wal, wal, we ain’t done so bad. Git yer light sails set. We’ll make a shift. Kittery’s liable to be along middlin’ soon, an’ I’m for lookin’ in to Fox Bay in th’ mornin’.”

It was midsummer, and the *Quickstep* had arrived home after a high-line halibut trip in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, when each man shared almost \$150 for a five weeks’ voyage fishing.

In John Peterson’s store at Decker’s Island the skipper was spinning the yarn to the storekeeper, and the latter was listening with acute interest.

“Aye, Tom, ye got the big trip off’n Kittery’s gear. But what was the big game ye put up on him in Fox Bay?” asked the storekeeper.

“Wal, I’m comin’ to that,” said Decker with a

slow smile. "Ye see, when the boys got a grouch on me fur losin' them foxes, I says to myself I'll git even with Kittery.

"I pulls acrost to his vessel, and as I knew he would have that raft ready and git aboard soon, I planned to delay him a while an' keep him from comin' up on me while I was haulin' his gear. So, as I was a-tellin' ye, I cut his fore an' main sheets, unrove his jigs an' halyards and unshipped his steerin' gear.

"Fixin' that up again would take him and his gang a good day's work, an' it gave me time to see if there was any fish on his hooks. While I was workin' away, I thought o' them foxes, an' it made me some mad to think that Kittery was goin' to rake in sich an easy pile o' money.

"I'd willingly have gone half and half with him if he'd ha' bin decent about it, but he had them guns an' cal'lated he could scoff everything. He's an awful feller to talk, an' I pictured him braggin' 'bout how he done Tommy Decker.

"'Decker's an easy mark, Decker's met his match in me. Did him out o' thirty thousand dollars'; an' sichlike talk.

"So I thought on some way to stop him, an', says I to myself, if I kin git him into Fox Bay, the trick might be done——"

"An' how did ye work that?" inquired the other eagerly.

"I jest turned to an' hove every lamp on his vessel overboard. Then I drew off every drop o' kerosene in the ile locker an' hove it an' th' cook's ile can over the side as well.

"Without a blame' lamp, candle or light of any sort aboard, I cal'lated that Mister Kittery 'ud

simply have to run in to Fox Bay for supplies onless he was agoin' to take chances o' steerin' without side lights or binnacle lights in his compass, or a light below decks after dark.

"After I hauled his trawls that day, I made for Fox Bay an' got there next mornin'. I went ashore an' saw th' man that looks after the interests of the proprietor of Anticosti Island an' told him how this Kittery had bin ashore an' poached some valuable black foxes.

"Here's a letter I got from him. Read what he says."

Peterson put on his spectacles and read the note aloud :

"Captain Thomas Decker,
Decker's Island, N.S.

"DEAR SIR :

"With reference to the illegal trapping of black foxes by the master and crew of the Newfoundland schooner *Ensenada* upon Isle d' Anticosti, which is private property, I beg to inform you that your timely information rendered us invaluable assistance in enforcing the laws of the Island.

"The schooner in question arrived off Fox Bay on the afternoon of the day following your departure, and her master and four of the crew came ashore to procure a supply of oil. Upon your information we detained them until the arrival of the Fisheries Protection cruiser *Seagull*—which vessel we were able to catch by wireless from Heath Point, after telephoning to that place.

"When searched by the cutter's men, we found two live black fox pups and a skin on board the schooner. These were confiscated, and the vessel

held for orders. Owing to some hitch or proper application of the law to the case, we had to release the vessel.

"We wish to thank you for the information which you laid against this vessel, and remain,

"Yours faithfully,

"HENRI BERMONT,

"Agent for the Proprietor.

"P.S.—We respected your wishes in the matter of secrecy as to the informant of the poaching."

Decker nodded, and a slow smile spread over his face.

"Hah!" he murmured. "I cal'late I cooked Bill Kittery's goose that time. It ain't always th' man with th' aces in his hand what gits th' jack-pot. Sometimes the other feller has an ace, too.

"I lost them foxes, but I got Bill's halibut. Bill lost foxes an' halibut both—so I cal'late I come out best in that deal."

And folding the letter up, he carefully placed it in a big leather wallet, well bulged with his share of the halibut trip, and walked out of the store, while Peterson gazed after him and murmured something about "a downy son-of-a-gun!"

IN his executive business office Thomas G. Mitcham, president of the Mitcham Shipping Corporation, slowly unfolded certain papers which he took from an envelope postmarked "Valparaiso, Chile." He commenced to read with a face set and stern and an expression of pain showed in his eyes.

Mitcham had started life as a sailor before the mast in Maine coasters. At twenty-eight he came out to the Pacific Coast as master of a Cape Horner. He left the sea then and started up in the shipping and lumber business when the country was young.

The qualities which served to push him from the forecastle to the command of a three-skys'l-yarder helped to impel him to the forefront of the industries he specialized in, and at the present moment he ranked as one of the big men of the West Coast.

It was after office hours and he was alone save for the night clerk in the outer office. The latter had received instructions to admit two persons when they called. One was Captain Walter Stewart, Superintendent of the Mitcham fleet, and the other was Professor Ambrose Thompson, scientist, inventor, and president of the Thompson Electric Corporation. When they arrived the night clerk was to lock the office doors.

Mitcham was reading :

"He shipped on the *Western Star* as ordinary

seaman, under the name of Thomas G. Walker. During the voyage from Newport News he was fearfully abused by the mate, Stotz, and his life was a regular hell. He was bullied and knocked about in the most brutal manner——"

A paragraph upon which his eyes rested for an indefinite period ran :

"... the men say that Walker threatened the mate with the law upon the arrival of the ship in Valparaiso and the man became afraid of punishment. They say he started the mizzen-topgallant brace while Walker was on the yard. As it was blowing hard and very dark at the time it is difficult to prove this. The lad was hurled from the yard, crashed head-first on an iron davit as he fell and went into the sea. As nothing could be proved against William Stotz he went north with the *Western Star* and was discharged in Seattle without a character by the master of the ship."

Mitcham slowly laid the papers down on his desk and his eyes filmed with tears. He ran nervous fingers through his greying hair and stared at the documents unseeing, and his shoulders shook spasmodically.

"Poor little Tommy," he murmured hoarsely. "Poor little son. You shouldn't have gone. You hadn't the strength and I knew it. But you had the Mitcham spirit and you ran away from college to sea, following the trail of your old dad——"

He stopped, choked in his utterance by the emotion which possessed him, and buried his head in his hands.

“Over the side—down from aloft—in the South Pacific—my son’s grave.”

There were wet splashes on the polished mahogany of the desk.

Ten minutes later he was his old self again and listening to the report of Captain Walter Stewart.

“We have secured the ship all right and I’ve picked up a bunch of tarriers for a crew. They’re all our own men—fellows who have been in our ships for years—and there are some hard nuts among them. I got McGuire, that ex-Navy pug, who’s master-at-arms on the *Kalani*, and I’ve told the wife that I’m about to go to Australia on business. As far as my end of the game’s concerned I’m all ready.”

Mitcham nodded gravely and turned to a thoughtful-looking, bespectacled man who was intently studying smoke-rings from his cigar.

“And you, professor?”

The other laid his cigar down and leaned forward.

“I’ve been aboard the ship, Tom, and I’ve already got something lined up. My greatest difficulty—that of getting leave from Mrs. Thompson to go to Australia—has been overcome, and they are making various apparatus for me at the plant. I’m prepared to serve you in my menial position and I hope you won’t growl at the meals. I’m likely to be a busy man aboard that ship.”

Mitcham smiled sadly.

“Well, gentlemen, I appreciate your kindness and interest in my behalf and I only hope things work out as planned. It is the only thing we can do. We cannot invoke the law upon that man Stotz——”

He paused and a grim, determined expression showed in his mouth and eyes as he added harshly—

"We must be a law unto ourselves."

"He's in Vancouver, is he?" queried the professor.

Mitcham nodded.

"Yes. My friend Robinson has him under his eye and Robinson will pick him up when I say the word. If you are ready, my friends, I'll wire Robinson to-night to bait the trap."

"We're ready."

Billy Stotz stamped into the Good Chow Café in Vancouver and, after hanging his hat on a peg, inserted his big body into one of the compartments with which the place was lined. Stotz was in ill humour and the scowl which usually graced his harsh features was seldom absent of late. He had been "on the beach" for some months now and he was tired of it; tired of loafing around the wharves and fed up with the drudgery of the occasional jobs which kept him from starvation.

When a man has a mate's licence and has been mate of fair-sized ships it is a bit of a come down to be scraping and painting fishing-boats and hustling freight for the wherewithal to eat and sleep.

Stotz hungered for the days of authority and longed for a chance to boss men. But Stotz's mentality was that of the slave-driver. He ordered with oaths and encouraged opposition that he might have the opportunity to enforce his will with kicks and blows. He was a sea-bully, a driver, a bucko with a Nero-like soul and a love for inflicting pain.

The times, however, were becoming too humane for men of his type.

On his last ship a lippy kid of an ordinary seaman had run foul of him, and because he happened to fall from aloft one dark night the skipper bluntly accused Stotz of having a hand in the accident.

"You hazed that lad the whole passage," the shipmaster had said, "and you've made a reg'lar hell-boat reputation for my ship. I don't need you any more, mister, and I'm giving ye a dirty discharge. You won't get a mate's berth on any American ship if I can help it."

After many tribulations in Seattle and other American West Coast ports, Billy Stotz drifted over to try his luck in Canada.

But Vancouver was not much of a signing-on port for mates. The craft that frequented the port were mostly "lime-juicers" whose crews stuck by the ships. Other crafts were British and Japanese steam tramps and Stotz had only a "square-rig ticket" as mate. He finally decided to remain in Vancouver until he could save enough money to go East. He was not making the money. Hence the grouch.

"Plate o' beans, cup o' coffee, 'n a couple o' doughnuts," he barked to the Chinese waiter tendering a stained and greasy menu-card. "And bring a paper if you have one."

In a minute or two the Oriental brought the order and a *Vancouver Province*, and while he was absorbing the food Mr. Stotz scanned the "Help Wanted" columns.

"Learn to draw," he quoted audibly. "'Cartoonists make big money.' 'Be a railway mail-clerk,' 'Pleasant home work addressin' envelopes,'

'Man to tend garden and run a car.' Why'n — ain't there no jobs for a sailor? 'Will pay forty dollars to man to paint my house.'"

He grunted and read that again.

"Might tackle that. I kin paint——"

He stopped, his eye arrested by a large advertisement head

MATE WANTED

"Oho!" He dropped his fork and held the paper toward the light.

He read:

"MATE WANTED

for American full-rigged ship. Must have United States licence and be used to handling square-sail. Apply Mr. Robinson, Dominion Bldg., between two and five p.m."

He read the paragraph again and tore the item out of the paper.

"Good enough," he murmured hopefully. "I'll be there with bells on."

And he waded cheerfully into the beans again.

Stotz did no work next morning but employed the time having a bath, a haircut and a general spruce-up. Much of the period was spent in concocting a plausible explanation for his lack of a reference from his last ship. A few minutes prior to the opening hour for seeing applicants he was in the office of J. W. Robinson, Shipping Broker, and asking for that gentleman. Two other men unmistakably seafarers, were also in the office

awaiting Mr. Robinson's pleasure. One of them addressed Stotz.

"Tryin' for that mate's berth, mister?"

The other grunted noncommittally as his questioner continued.

"Dern funny thing, ain't it, why they sh'd advertise for an American mate over here? Sh'd imagine the woods was full o' them 'crost the line."

"The woods is full o' bums an' rum-hounds, maybe," growled Stotz truculently after getting a whiff of the other's breath, "but good square-rig American mates ain't growin' on the bushes these days. They're all in steam and fore'n'afters."

The other man shook his head doubtfully.

"There's lots o' men to be got in Seattle an' 'Frisco——"

The door of a private office opened and a smart young man of about thirty-five called out—

"Step inside one of you men!"

The other two advanced but Stotz elbowed them none too politely aside and entered the office ahead of them.

Giving Stotz a keen glance, Mr. Robinson spoke.

"Your name?"

"Stotz—William Stotz is my name, sir!"

The other closed the door.

"Sit down, Mr. Stotz."

And while the mate was lowering his huge frame into a chair Mr. Robinson's keen eyes flashed an expression of relief. He picked up a typewritten sheet from his desk and said:

"I am asked, Mr. Stotz, to secure a competent mate for an American ship now loading at Bishop's Mills, Washington, for Sydney, Australia. She is called the *Androsina* and is, I believe, a rebuilt

English iron ship which got ashore on the Columbia River Bar and was salvaged and repaired in the United States.

"Now mates are not so scarce that they need be advertised for, but certain kinds of mates are not common nowadays. The master of the *Androsina* is part-owner of her and an old-school Maine Yankee sailorman who has taken to sea again after a long spell ashore. He's had two or three mates already and has fired them because they were too slack, or lazy, or lacked 'pep.' He wants an old-time mate, he says, a driver, a man with fists to rouse lazy, cheeky sailors around—the kind you read about but seldom see' are the words this old skipper uses."

Mr. Robinson paused and looked keenly at Stotz. The mate was figuratively licking his lips at the prospect and the exultant cruelty expressed in his mouth and eyes impressed the ship-broker, who mentally congratulated himself that he wasn't a sailor under the command of such as Stotz.

"I reckon I kin qualify, Mr. Robinson," said the other in his growling voice, "for that's the reason why I'm out of a berth jest now. I was discharged from my last ship 'cause I kep' her crowd a-humpin'. But her old skipper was afraid the crew 'ud make trouble for him so he fired me and we had words. He was too humane. Ye can't treat the cattle ye get at sea nowadays with kid gloves if you want to get the work done. Swabs, I calls 'em, hoboos 'n' swabs. Ain't no real sailormen nowadays, mister."

The ship-broker smiled coldly.

"I s'pose you're right, Stotz."

Then with a knowing look he said—

"Of course, you know why this old skipper wants a live mate?"

The other didn't know, but made a bold guess.

"To run the ship down-east fashion, eh? Hammer the crews 'n' make 'em run when we reach port, sir?"

Robinson laughed somewhat artificially.

"You've got it, Stotz. I see you've been in the game before. And, speaking confidentially, in this case there will be so much added to your wages according to the number of hands who skip in Sydney. The hotter you make the *Androsina*, the more dollars to you."

Mr. Stotz grinned—a wolfish smile—and he smacked his huge fists together as Robinson touched a button. A clerk answered and the ship-broker said:

"Tell the other applicants not to wait. The berth is filled."

"A rare dog, this Robinson," thought Stotz, elated. "He knows an able man when he sees one. Ain't asked to see a reference or a derved thing. Takes me on my looks. This'll be velvet—pure velvet."

And aloud he inquired—

"Might I ask who is master of the *Androsina*, sir?"

"Mitcham—Captain Thomas Mitcham," answered the other, eyeing Stotz somewhat closely. "Do you know him?"

The mate murmured the name two or three times to himself and finally observed:

"A stranger to me, sir. Don't know him, but I recall a shipping concern of the same name. Steam tramp owners——"

"No connection whatever," interrupted Robinson a trifle hastily, and he proceeded to the business of the engagement.

Two days later Mr. William Stotz, accompanied by his dunnage, arrived on board the American full-rigged ship *Androsina* and asked for Captain Mitcham.

"He's not aboard," answered a somewhat dull-looking fellow of about forty who was lolling over the poop rail smoking a cigarette. He gave Stotz a lazy scrutiny and spoke again—

"Anything I kin' do for ye, mister?"

"Yes," barked the other. "Where's the second mate?"

He of the vacuous countenance grinned, and the cigarette hung sloppily from his lower lip.

"I'm that guy, mister. I'm second mate aboard this ballyhoo."

Stotz decided that he would take hold right there and then.

"You are, are ye?" he growled truculently. "Then, Mister Second Mate, you can call a hand to git my stuff aboard and into my berth."

Mister Second Mate still carried his vapid grin.

"An' who may you be, mister?" he asked slowly and favouring Stotz with an up-and-down stare.

"The noo mate, ef you want t' know. Stotz is my name, William Stotz, and I'm a live one. Ef you 'n' I are goin' to make a hit you'll need to show some life around here."

He straightened his broad shoulders and glowered saturninely at the sloppy one.

The latter ignored the threat and held out his hand.

"I'm glad to know you, Mr. Stotz," he said

stolidly. "I'm sure we'll git along. My name's Stewart—Walter Stewart. The Old Man's ashore. Don't know when he'll be aboard, but he left a note for you with th' stoo'ard——"

"Get it!" snapped Stotz, "and show me my berth."

And he followed the slouching Stewart below.

The note from the captain told Stotz to take charge and get the ship ready for sea.

"I will not join you until the last minute. Have the ship out in the stream and hove short at six a.m. Tuesday. I shall bring the crew out with me on the tow-boat."

With the assistance of shore hands Stotz got the *Androsina* ready for her voyage across the Pacific and incidentally formed the opinion that Stewart was a "bonehead" and hardly knew the difference between the forebitts and the main-brace bumpkin. The steward, Thompson, was another "mug"—a gabby, doddering article with no brains, who wasn't on to his job. Stotz wondered what the skipper would be like. If he fancied a tough mate he certainly picked two lemons in the other members of the after-guard.

On Monday night the ship was in the stream to an anchor and ready for sea.

"Keep yer donkey fire banked and have steam to raise the hook at six to-morrow morning," he told the donkeyman, and he retired to his room to muse over the coming voyage and the percentage that should come to him if he played his cards right.

"Twenty hands for'ad—barrin' the bos'un, car-

penter and sail-maker. I sh'd be able to make the whole twenty skip 'n' I reckon I will or my name ain't 'Bully' Stotz for nawthin'."

He spent a pleasant evening oiling his revolver, polishing a pair of brass knuckledusters and making a new lanyard for a short oaken club. The man-handler was clearing for action.

In the grey dawn the tug came alongside and disgorged a crowd of men upon the *Androsina's* decks. Twenty-three hands, lugging their dunnage, went forward. One man came aft and was met at the poop ladder by Mr. Stotz.

The mate saw in Captain Thomas Mitcham a proper "hard-case down-east Yankee." The cold grey eyes, the impassive face and thin, set lips, the square clean-shaven jaw and calm, clipper speech impressed Stotz.

This heavily built, grey-haired, sea-captain of fifty-five or thereabouts was of the type who took his position seriously and who carried an Olympian air of command.

"There is no flies on him," thought the mate, and he would blossom under the ægis of such a skipper. He would make the reputation of Stotz and the *Androsina* something to be talked about in ship's fo'c'sles for a hundred years to come.

"My name is Stotz, sir," volunteered the mate. "I took charge, sir, accordin' to your instructions."

The captain gave him a searching, all-embracing glance. His right hand tightened on the handles of the suitcase he was carrying and the leather creaked with the pressure, while the muscles bulged faintly in his jaws. Beyond these things, discernible only by a minute observer, he gave no other expression of his feelings in first viewing

the "old-time bucko mate" he had advertised for. Nodding curtly at the officer's information, he said quietly:

"Pass your hawser to the tug and get your anchor. We'll tow out immediately."

He went into the cabin and the mate went forward.

When the ship was under way and the tow-boat was hauling her down the bay, Stotz came aft. He noticed one or two things while forward. The first thing he mentally remarked was that the crew were all sober—a rather uncommon state of affairs on an outward-bounder. The second thing that impressed him was the able-bodied, one hundred per cent. American-British, respectable appearance of the crowd.

Billy didn't like that. A Yanko-Limey gang would prove a tough proposition to handle. Billy preferred a foremast crowd of Dutchmen and dagos—a herd with racial antipathies who would not hang together and put up a united front against the officer who "horsed them around." These latter, as a general rule, lacked the pugnacity and sand of the Anglo-Saxons in resenting aggression.

The tug let them go off the Lightship, and Stotz was well braced for trouble when sail-setting began. But he found it hard to start trouble. The foremast hands were all able seamen and knew where the topsail halyards belayed.

They didn't go running around the decks like lost sheep looking for the gear, and when an order was given they obeyed coolly and smartly—affording Stotz no excuse for "opening the ball" by laying out someone.

As he fingered the brass knuckles in his jacket pocket he endeavoured to incite revolt by backing his commands with ugly words and blistering oaths, but the crowd took no notice.

For three days they stood him off, and Stotz was wondering whether or not his nature had undergone a change. He hadn't the ghost of an opportunity to clip anyone. He had called them names—certain names which invite retaliation from the most spineless—but they were deaf to them. One man, a broken-nosed Irishman called McGuire, had shown a flash of resentment, but it came to nothing. However, Mr. Stotz had his first run-in with his watch on the third night.

They were squaring mainyards and the mate was slacking away the lee braces while the men were hauling away on the opposite side of the poop. The crowd were singing out and pulling away in fine style rounding in the yards when Stotz started to curse them for "a lazy pack of useless paper-backed farmers!"

Someone told him to "dry up and go to ——!" and this was the officer's excuse to raise the curtain. He belayed the brace in a trice and whipping a greenheart pin out of the mizzen rail, hove it with all his strength in the direction of the voice.

Inflamed with the lust to inflict bodily pain, he didn't care whom he hit with the heavy missile. All he wanted was an excuse to jump in among the men and smash their faces with brass-shod knuckles or stamp their ribs in with heavy boots.

The mate had no clear recollection of what happened after he threw the missile. It seemed to him as if every man in his watch had a belaying-pin handy and had hurled it at him and most of

them landed on his body. Suffice to say, he regained consciousness to see Captain Mitcham standing over him with a drawn revolver and Stewart shining an electric hand-torch in his face.

"A —— of a mate you are," the captain said in a biting, sarcastic voice which cut Stotz like a whip-lash. The second mate looked stupidly on.

"Go 'n' doctor yourself up," the skipper ordered him. "Your watch have mauled you around some."

Stotz rose to his feet and, dazed, limping and furious with rage and the pain of the blows he had received, went below and held communion with cold water and arnica, picturesque oaths and terrific threats of vengeance. It was the first time in his life that a watch had trimmed him, and he would have their pelts for it.

Next morning the mate went forward with a revolver in one pocket and the knuckle-dusters in the other. He was loaded for bear. The watch were setting the foresail and Stotz was looking them over searchingly to pick out the man who had talked back to him. A sailor was singing out at the fore-tack and he was chanteying—

"I told the mate to go to ——!"

And the others chorused—

"A long time ago!"

The mate recognized the voice of the chanteyman and sensed the significance of the words. He bristled, leaped up on the fo'c'sle-head and made for the man at the tack-tackle.

"You're the guy what gave me some slack lip last night——"

The chantey-man was the stocky Irishman, McGuire—a fellow with quick eyes, a broken nose, and thick ears. The shoulder and arm muscles of him rippled under the thin shirt he was wearing, and his whole make-up bespoke a trained pugilist.

Stotz never got a chance to finish his accusation or to get either knuckle-duster or revolver out, for the sailor leaped up from the rope he was pulling on and was smashing the mate with well-aimed blows. The officer knew he was trapped and while he fought he roared for help and tried to get aft. But help was a long time coming, and he was ready to take the count when Stewart came slouching easily forward and ordered McGuire away.

"Ordered" is the correct term. The bonehead second mate merely drawled a "Stow that, you!" and the man who had beaten the mate's face to a gory mass of cuts and bruises dropped his hands and shuffled down the lee ladder. Mr. Stotz, dazed and bewildered, permitted Stewart to lead him aft to his cabin, while Captain Mitcham, seated at the saloon table, favoured the mate with a baleful glance.

The officer bathed his bruised face and cursed the *Androsina's* crew with all the oaths he could lay his tongue to. Then he went up on deck and cursed the second mate for being so slow in coming to his aid.

"What kind of an animal are ye, mister?" he mouthed. "Why didn't ye git for'ad with the stoo'ard, Chips, Sails, and the bos'un an' wade into them scum? Ye didn't know what to do? Sink me, but you're the perishin' limit as a second

greaser ! Ye're so gaul-derned slow that ye ain't caught up with yer age yet ! ”

He paused while the other regarded him vacantly.

“ We've got to git that joker, Stewart,” he growled on. “ He's a damned ‘ pug,’ I kin see that, 'n' I sh'd have plugged him with an ounce o' lead afore he got a chanct at me. It'll never do for a foremast hand to beat up a mate and git away with it.”

“ How are you goin' to get him ? ” queried Stewart with a blank face.

“ To-night—in my watch,” replied the battered Stotz vindictively, “ I'll lay for him when he comes aft to take his wheel. You kin stand the rest of the crowd off at the poop ladders with a gun.”

The mate outlined his plan of campaign and Stewart nodded dully. Stotz felt that the second mate was a broken reed to lean on, but he had to ring him in. The steward, garrulous and spineless, was useless, and the skipper ? Stotz would sooner die than seek his help. It would be a tacit admission of incompetency on the mate's part.

Shortly after midnight McGuire came up the lee poop ladder to relieve the wheel. The mate was waiting for him in the shadow of the mizzenmast and Stewart was standing under the lee of the weather lifeboat. As the sailor came walking aft Stotz, murderously inflamed by the hammering he had received, stood ready to smash the man's skull with an iron bar, and he had the weapon upraised to strike when his throat was seized from behind and he was thrown violently to the deck.

Grappling with his unknown opponent, the mate bawled to Stewart and got a hand free and into his

jacket pocket. Grasping the handle of the revolver in there, he started firing through the cloth into the body of the man wrestling with him.

The shots seemed to have no effect; Stewart had vanished and the poop was crowded with men who piled on to the struggling mate and used fist and boot to terrible purpose. The discharge of his revolver had set the lining of Stotz's jacket afire and the smouldering cloth was burning into his flesh.

He roared and bawled for help and fought like a tiger, but was finally pounded and kicked into insensibility by the vicious blows of many men. Bully Stotz had met a crowd who were too much for him.

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He regained consciousness to find himself in his bunk with his clothes and boots on. He was neither bandaged nor bathed and his whole body was tortured with the pain of many blows and his face was puffed and smeared with congealed blood. For a long time he lay writhing with the agony of burns and bruises and vaguely wondered why no one had attended to his injuries.

"Stoo'ard!" he called hoarsely, and that individual appeared beside him.

"Why'n blazes haven't ye fixed me up, you lazy scum!" he growled harshly. "I kin hardly move."

The steward's face was expressionless as he replied:

"Cap'n said you was to fix yerself up. He had to get out of his bunk last night an' rescue you. He says any man what allows his watch to hammer him as your watch hammered you ain't fit to take

charge of one. He says you was to attend to yer-self an' report for duty as quickly as possible as he wasn't a-goin' to stand your watch.

"He said if you didn't show a leg quick he'd shove you for'ad and make that boxer-feller McGuire second mate. He says——"

The garrulous steward was checked by a string of frightful oaths from Stotz who roared at him.

"Git t' bluey-ruin outa here, you gabby flunkey, an' bring me some hot water 'n' a cup o' coffee!"

The steward obeyed, but the mate was unable to rise in his bunk and bathe his wounds. He lay sprawled in his berth, helpless and dazed and concocting murderous plans for revenge, and the whole day passed without any person coming near him. He remained in this condition until dark.

Eight bells had struck and he was aroused by the sound of the poop bell. His room was black dark. Suddenly a circle of white light appeared on the bulkhead at the foot of his bunk and a blurred face took shape within it. As Stotz stared curiously at the phenomenon the face became clearly defined as that of a youth of seventeen or eighteen with curly hair and frank, smiling eyes.

The mate was mystified at the apparition, and then recognition flooded his dazed brain and he gave a hoarse cry—"Young Walker——!"

He stared, appalled at the vision, fascinated by it; then it vanished, leaving him almost paralysed with fear.

He remained quiet and frightened for a long time, wondering if the whole thing was but a figment of his imagination. He was on the point of dismissing the vision as such when the circle of

light once more appeared on the bulkhead. This time the legend—

“Who killed young Walker?”

flashed before his eyes in blood-red letters and the man cowered under his blanket and gave a hoarse bellow of terror.

The steward entered.

“Did you call, mister?” he inquired stolidly.

Stotz pointed to the bulkhead where the letters still blazed.

“D’ye see that? D’ye see that?” he whispered in visible agitation.

The other followed the direction of the mate’s pointing hand.

“See what?” he asked calmly.

“That writin’—them letters at the foot o’ the bunk,” cried Stotz huskily.

The steward appeared nonplussed. He stared at the blood-red legend and at Stotz with an uncomprehending expression.

“What kind o’ letters? I don’t see nawthin’.”

The mate passed his hand over his eyes and growled an oath.

“I reckon I’m off my damned nut an’ seein’ things. Git me a drink o’ whisky, stoo’ard, an’ fix me up.”

The steward made no reply, but slipped out of the room, leaving Stotz alternately staring at the vision and cursing his eyes and conscience. He did not return with the whisky, and shortly after his departure the accusing question on the wall vanished. But the words were burned into the mate’s brain and afforded him a night of agitation and the fear of impending disaster.

Next morning, feeling very sick and shaky, he managed to crawl out of his bunk. He stepped over to the mirror in the washstand to examine his swollen face and stopped as if petrified, when he saw, staring at him out of the glass, the features of the youth with the smiling eyes. Below the likeness was scrawled in red letters—

“Who killed this lad?”

The sight gave Stotz such a shock that he dropped to the floor of his cabin. Avoiding the vision in the mirror, he reached for a towel and staggered out of his berth to the bathroom at the after-end of the saloon. When he returned he saw with relief that the vision was gone.

“The hammerin’ I got from them swabs has knocked my brains galley-west and I’m seein’ things,” he muttered as he pulled off his shirt to fix up the bruises on his body.

He appeared at the dinner-table and the captain gave him a cold, unsympathetic glance.

“Well, mister,” he said in a frigid tone, “have you rested up? Are you a-goin’ to take charge of your watch this afternoon?”

“I reckon I will,” growled Stotz sullenly.

And then he added with suppressed truculence—

“Why didn’t you ’n’ the second mate bear a hand the other night?”

The master gave Stotz a contemptuous stare.

“I reckon, mister, if I hadn’t of chased your watch away from you I’d have had the job of dumpin’ you to the fish in a canvas jacket. ’N I reckon, mister, if you can’t take care of yourself with your watch you’d better go for’ad and I’ll put another man in your place.”

Stotz subsided and nothing more was said during the meal. This cold-blooded old down-easter was too much for Stotz.

He relieved the second mate after dinner. He was feeling considerably jarred in body and brain, and the beatings he had received had knocked the sand out of him. He would be careful with his crowd in future, but promised himself a fine reckoning when the opportunity came. A broken shackle on a tops'l yard foot-rope would send a few of them crashing to the deck, or—he'd fix up something ere the voyage was over.

During his watch on deck he went into the chart-room to look at the aneroid barometer. Plastered across the dial of it was a photograph of the lad with the curly hair and smiling eyes! With an involuntary grunt of fear the mate dropped down on the settee. Too frightened to look at the instrument again, he jumped out on deck and stood outside the chart-house to recover his wits.

Then he went to scan the dial of the taff-rail log and once again the youthful features smiled at him from the glass face of the mechanism. He passed his hands across his eyes and became conscious that the wheelsman was throwing furtive glances at him.

"What the damned blazes are you starin' at?" he barked viciously. "How are you headin'?"

And he advanced and squinted into the binnacle. From the glass of the compass bowl the smiling face of the youth, Walker, stared up at him and Stotz, with a clammy sweat breaking out on him, gasped huskily to the man at the wheel—

"What the ——'s that?"

The man stared into the compass.

"What's that, sir? She's on her course, sir."

The mate looked into the binnacle again and once more viewed the likeness which was haunting him. Then, glancing narrowly at the impassive face of the helmsman, he turned and staggered forward like a man in a trance, muttering:

"I'm goin' off my nut, sure. I'm seein' things what ain't there."

During the watch he lolled over the rail and tried to fathom out the whole business, but his dull wits refused to afford a reasonable solution. He almost hoped that someone was putting up a game on him, but he couldn't see it. It was beyond his limited comprehension. The Walker business savoured of the supernatural or else his nerves were playing him tricks.

"I've let that damned young swab get on my mind," he consoled himself. "I'll be all right in a day or so."

At fifteen minutes to eight bells he went aft to look at the log and steering-compass with nerves braced to perceive the face which haunted him. There was no sign of it, however, and he noted the readings of both instruments with relief and entered the chart-room to write up the deck log. He opened the book at the page for the day and saw, scrawled across the sheet in blood-red letters—

"Who killed young Walker?"

Staring with fascinated eyes at the terrifying sentence, Stotz saw it fade before his gaze and the page was once more blank.

The officer trembled visibly and gingerly picked up the log-book and examined it. It was the

ordinary ship's deck log and there were several entries of his own in it.

"I'm goin' bugs, sure," he croaked, and for a minute or so he was too shaken to write up the record of his watch. When he did so his hand shook so much that his writing was almost illegible.

The second mate came on the poop at four to relieve him and Stotz gave him a searching glance. The dull inanity of the man's face convinced the mate that Stewart was not playing tricks on him. Stewart had just left an English ship in the Australian trade and would know nothing of young Walker. Stewart could be counted out.

"How're ye feelin' now, mister?" inquired the second mate.

Stotz ignored the question and growled the course to be steered and went below. Matters on the *Androsina* were getting him rattled. He wanted a drink to brace him up after the shocks he had received.

The steward was in his room playing the phonograph when the mate appeared in the door.

"I want a bottle of whisky, stoo'ard," he said and stopped suddenly with blanching features. The phonograph was playing a singing record, but when the officer leaned inside the door, the song stopped in the middle of a verse and the singer shouted out—

"Who killed young Walker?"

Then the thread of the song was taken up and finished as it should be.

"What—what in Tophet kind of a game is this?" blurted Stotz, glaring fearfully at the steward and the phonograph.

Thompson looked up in surprised innocence.

"What, sir? What's the matter, sir?" he inquired, staring curiously at the pallid-faced mate.

"What—what did that there thing say jest now—about Walker?" growled the other, slowly recovering his nerve.

"About who? Walker? Who's Walker, sir? Why, it was only playin' a song. I'll play it over again if you like. It's a good one."

And the steward started to rewind the instrument.

"Never mind that," barked Stotz apprehensively. "Get me a bottle of hooch, *pronto!* I'm under the weather."

Mumbling to himself, the mate returned to his room with the liquor and lighted his lamp with a trembling hand. These continual and unexpected references to young Walker and the visions of the lad's face were playing havoc with his nerve, while the terrific physical punishment he had received had weakened his spirit considerably. The white lamp-shade was blank when he first ignited the wick, but as he waited to trim the flame red scratches rapidly appeared on the glass and before his panic-stricken gaze there formed the ominous words—

"Who killed young Walker?"

With a terrified oath, Stotz blew the lamp out.

He slumped down on the sofa, unnerved and bewildered with fear, and in the quiet of his darkened room, heard a voice talking close to him. It sounded like no one on the ship but it was speaking in clear, incisive tones—

"He started the mizzen t'gallant brace while

Walker was on the yard and the boy was hurled from aloft. As he came crashing down his head smashed against an iron davit and he bounced into the sea. Young Walker was deliberately murdered and we know the man who did it!"

The mysterious voice paused and resumed in calm judicial utterance—

"Who killed young Walker?"

Even while the voice was speaking the frightened mate could hear the steward singing in the pantry and he mentally abandoned the hopeful surmise that Thompson was playing a trick on him.

Stotz lurched to his feet and made a rush for the door of his berth. He grasped the handle and found the door locked. He tugged and pulled and charged the panels with his shoulders and booted feet, but it was an extra heavy door and it refused to budge.

He roared for the steward, but no answer came. With the sweat of fright pouring off his face and cursing and threatening with husky oaths, Stotz lighted the lamp again and hove the accusing shade to the floor where it smashed into fragments. He stood up with his back to the wall and glared around like a hunted animal.

Wherever his eyes roved the accusing words were before him. The light of the lamp revealed

"Who killed young Walker?"

scrawled in red in the centre of the white panels of the bulkheads. It was printed in red block type on paper strips gummed to the mouldings and stencilled in red on the panel frames and overhead beams.

The very sheets and pillow-slips of his bunk flaunted the damning phrase and white cards, hundreds of them, littered the floor, and upon them were printed the question—

“Who killed young Walker?”

Upon the mirror of the washstand a lifesized face of the Walker lad gazed with smiling eyes at the cowering mate. The eyes were burning into his brain, and Stotz hove the whisky bottle at the likeness and the flying glass rebounded and cut his hands and face.

He cursed and roared like a maniac for a minute with the blood dripping from him. Then he paused, panting, and slumped into a chair, glancing furtively around the room.

A voice began speaking and the mate shrank from the direction from whence it came.

“Stotz! Who killed young Walker?”

It was a harsh voice, chill, insistent and portentous. From behind came another dread question.

“Stotz! Who started the mizzen-t’gallant-brace and sent young Walker to his death?”

The terrified man shrieked:

“I don’t know! I don’t know! It wasn’t me! I don’t know anythin’ about young Walker!”

The voice continued:

“Stotz! Who bullied and hazed and kicked and beat and ultimately killed young Walker on the barque *Western Star*?”

Then the other unknown questioner chimed in—

“Who killed young Walker?”

It was uncanny, brain-wrecking and horrible. The victim shrieked curseful denials and at intervals rose and charged the door of the berth. At times he slumped into his chair and held his hands over his ears.

But hour after hour the unseen inquisitors voiced their insistent questions, methodically and in the same icy tones, and wherever Stotz looked his eyes met the fateful words—

“ Who killed young Walker ? ”

The words were being branded into his soul.

Throughout the night the question was shot at him. Stotz felt that he was going mad. He would have to get away from those accusing tones and the sight of the legends which for ever met his eyes. He pleaded for mercy, for a let-up, for a chance to explain, but the only reply was the insistent—

“ Who killed young Walker ? ”

He heard the tramp of the watch overhead pulling at the main braces and he recognized Captain Mitcham's voice as he shouted to Stewart while taking a star sight early in the morning. This told Stotz that neither the captain nor second mate was of the unknown accusers and the knowledge unnerved him still more. While the captain was singing out to Stewart at the chronometers the voices were vibrating in the mate's ears with monotonous persistence—

“ Who killed young Walker ? ”

Stotz rummaged the room looking for a weapon, but found nothing worthy of the name. His revolver, club, and even his heavy leather sea-boots

were gone. Nothing in the shape of an offensive instrument remained but the fragments of broken glass.

Crazed, nerveless, and wrecked mentally and physically, Stotz groped on the floor for a splinter of mirror glass. His fingers closed on a jagged, dagger-like fragment and he regarded it with eyes in which the light of incipient madness blazed.

He was appalled by the continuous questioning. No human being could reiterate the accusing phrase in the same tones, hour after hour, with such unvarying monotony. He was convinced that his brain had given way, that he had imagined it all, that he was mad.

“It’s not real!”

He shouted, threatened, cursed and bragged that he was not afraid of any living man, but the reply to such mouthings was ever—

“Who killed young Walker?”

He was mad all right, and they would be coming in soon to clap the irons on him. They would chain him up like a beast. Would they? He smiled cunningly and fingered the spear of mirror glass.

“Who killed young Walker?”

Ears and eyes absorbed the insistent question and his mental resistance was breaking up. When the porthole revealed the grey dawn stealing over the quiet sea the man shrieked defiantly—

“I did, damn him! I killed the cub. Started the brace an’ sent him smashin’ down from aloft—the cheeky, lippy young swine!”

And he plunged the splinter of glass into his throat.

PERHAPS I am doing Captain Ezekiel Smith an injustice when I say he was a mean man. He was only inordinately careful of incurring expenses. If you were a friend of the skipper and he met you somewhere with a saloon close aboard, he would buy the drinks just as freely as the next man. But if you were a poor devil of a fore-mast-jack on his Bluenose barque *Trade Wind* you'd say he'd carry his mother's corpse to sea and bury it there to save funeral charges.

"Luggy" Watson, steering at the barque's wheel, thought so, and as he was first trick, it was up to him to size up the calibre of the barque's afterguard and report to the crowd for'ard. With this object first in mind, he kept an eye on the compass, another on the weather leech of the main-royal, and an open ear for quarterdeck conversation between skipper and mate. Watson's auricular appendages were large and receptive, and protruded to starboard and port of his unhandsome bullet head like studdingsails, and his shipmates were wont to say that the ship made a knot an hour more when running with square yards during Luggy's trick at the wheel. However, that has nothing to do with the story, but it will serve to show that most of Captain Smith's loud conversation vibrated on Luggy's tympanums.

The barque had just dropped a towboat outside

of Newcastle, N.S.W., and the price extracted by the tug's skipper for pulling the heavy, coal-laden vessel to sea caused the tight-fisted Nova Scotian to exude perspiration and profanity when he thought over it.

"Sink me!" he rumbled to the mate as they paced the weather alley. "I hope I'll never see that cursed place again. What with a dock strike, two months in the fifth tier alongside the Dyke and the price them dirty crimps screwed me for a crew of no-sailors and sojers, I've had a session and no fatal error. Then this blamed tug sticks me for as much in towage as his kettle is worth. Lord Harry! it's been the very devil, but I'm through with it after this. As soon as this craft gets to 'Frisco, she goes to the cannery companies. Then I go back east and lay up."

"Then ye've decided t' sell her, Cap'en?" queried the mate.

"Aye! She goes to the Alaska Cannery Company as soon as we get the cargo out of her. They've offered me a fair price, and as wind-jammer freights have gone to hell these days, I cal'late I'll take it."

This part of the conversation hardly interested Mr. Watson. He didn't care a continental what happened to the barque after she arrived, and he was engaged in correcting the flapping leech of the main t'gallan's'l, when more momentous talk floated in his direction and caused him to strain his auditory nerves.

"Spruce her up—" it was the skipper talking—"she's got to look her best when we arrive . . . crew . . . paid forty dollars blood money for them . . . work 'em up good . . . beach-

combers and Sydney larrikins . . . haze 'em . . . they'll cut and run soon's we strike 'Frisco Bay . . . leave it to you'n second mate. . . ."

"Th' nawsty brute," commented Watson, and his spirits fell like the barometer in a West India hurricane when he saw the chief blower smack a horny palm with a heavy fist in anticipatory glee of planting said fist on some poor flatfoot's physiognomy in the near future. When the wheel was relieved, Luggy and the port watch went below, and to an apprehensive crowd he retailed the skipper's conversation. Comments were naturally lurid and blasphemous.

"The 'orriddest kind o' skippers t' sail wiv is the ones like our ol' man. 'E's a stinkin' Blue-nose t' begin wiv, an' 'e's so cussed mean that 'e'd swipe th' pennies from the eyes of a corpse. 'E probably owns a part o' this soft wood hooker, an' 'e'll sure to' be an 'oly terror for savin' expenses. An' ye sh'd 'ave seen th' nawsty wye th' bloomin' myte smacks 'is bloomin' mitts togever when th' ol' man told 'im to sock it to us. Hidjious, I calls it. Sye, 'oo's Peggy? Go aft an' git th' grub."

When the ordinary seaman brought in the hook-pot of tea, the bucket of pea soup and the mess kit of salt pork and potatoes, Mr. Watson was cursefully indignant.

"Look at this truck!" he cried. "Shore grub's finished now, an' we've got t' fill our insides wiv this. Look at this bucket o' bullet soup—salt water an' gravel, I calls it. Tea—water bewitched an' tea begrudged,—an' this 'ere pork—Lord, reg'lar Fanny Adams for sure! No bloomin' wonder th' police couldn't find no bloomin' trace

of 'er," and he cut his whack with evident disgust.

Then the cook ambled in, full to the back teeth with portentous information. "What d'ye think o' th' grub, boys?"

"Rotten!" snarled a chorus of surly voices.

The cook nodded. "'Tain't nawthin' to what's comin' though. Th' beef fair stunk as me'n th' stoo'ard opened up a cask, while th' pork an' biscuit 'ud make a lime-juicer sick. Th' stoo'ard said he never laid eyes on sich rotten truck in all his life. He had to lay down in his bunk for a spell arter breakin' out th' stores—th' butter an' pork fair turned his stomick——"

"Th' hell ye say," growled the port watch resentfully, and Luggy hove his pannikin down and spoke prophetically. "Yus, we're in for it! 'Twill be nigger-drivin' frum here to Golden Gyte an' look up an' stand frum under the 'ole bloomin' v'y'ge."

A British colonial ship is not a "lime-juicer," and though both fly the same ensign, yet the laws which govern both have different interpretations. Strike a seaman aboard a British vessel and he will have you "logged" and heavily fined for violating the articles of the merchant shipping act as soon as he can enter a complaint with the first consul.

If the vessel is a Bluenose, Mr. Consul will make a deprecatory gesture and inform you that he has no jurisdiction over Canadian ships.

"Very sorry, y'know, but you'd bettah send youah complaint to Canada. The authorities theah will look into it foah you." If you are in Valparaiso, the recommendation is likely to be acted upon.

The *Trade Wind* was a Bluenoser; the master

was Nova Scotian ; the mate was down-east Yankee, and the second greaser was an Aberdeen Scotsman who had "bumped up against" the odious merchant shipping act so often that he gloried in being able to break most of its regulations with impunity. With such a combination in authority, the barque's foremast crowd had a hot time.

It was hotter still when they drifted into a calm belt in twenty south, and the mates had both their watches over the side in boats and on painting stages daubing the barque's topsides with a mixture of lampblack and kerosene. The sea stretched in a huge plain of silent glassiness, and overhead a copper sun literally scorched the perspiring men working in the torrid heat. Under the grateful shade of an awninged poop, lolled the mates superintending the work—irritable with the heat and savage with the feelings induced by stagnant calm.

The skipper had been leaning over the taffrail, and, flopping in his carpet slippers, he came for'ard to the two mates.

"Say," he said. "There's a power of good looking slush floating on the water hereabouts. See those two lumps there?" And he pointed to a couple of chunks of greyish grease floating near the barque.

"Must be dumped from the galleys of those Australian liners. They're very wasteful, but we can use it for slushing down the masts. Send one of your boats after it with an empty barrel. See, there's several pieces around."

And the mate hid a smile as he called out to the men painting in the quarter-boat, "Git a bar'l'n scoop up that slush ye see floatin' around. Stow it away in th' paint room."

"Auld man is great on savin' things," remarked the Aberdonian second mate lazily puffing away at his pipe.

"Aye," returned the other. "He'd b'ile his father's body for th' tallow. Mean as hell."

The calm lasted long enough to get the barque's hull painted to the waterline. Then as they box-hauled the windjammer through the doldrums and across the equator, the overworked crew were kept busy rattling down and setting up the rigging in the sweating heat. In the tropical rainstorms they worked around the decks chipping rust and scraping cable, and the mates spent the best part of their time planning work-up jobs.

"Remember," the skipper had said, "those sojers have got to skip out when we make port, so make it hot for them. They're signed on for a return voyage to Australia again, you know, but, as no return voyage is going to be made, I want them to jump the ship. See that they do." And the mates did their best to see.

Dutch Willy had four of his front teeth knocked out by coming in violent contact with a jib hank—said hank being over the greaser's doubled-up fist. Willy's crime consisted in dropping a margarine can full of tar over the side. Luggy Watson was fanned to sleep for a whole watch with a green-heart belaying pin skilfully manipulated by the down-east mate. Luggy's offence was dozing at the wheel one night and getting the fore-royal aback. Captain Smith put the port watch "on allowance" because they came aft and complained of the food, and the luckless shellbacks merely existed on the religious prescription of diet *à la* Board of Trade. Altogether both watches had an

exciting time, and the Maine mate was thinking of qualifying for a "white hope" with the amount of pugilistic exercise he had been putting in on the *Trade Wind's* crowd. So you will understand that the barque was not exactly an ocean Valhalla.

Seaman Watson, being a man of a little more spirit than the spineless creatures composing the rest of his watch, made up his mind that he would "get" the mate sooner or later. He made a very fair try one day while aloft on the mizzen fitting a new maintopgallantsail brace lead block, but unfortunately the officer stepped away just as the heavy article struck the white planks of the deck and made a visible dent. As the Yankee mate did not believe in accidents, Luggy was received at the weather rigging and laid out cold for being so careless.

When he came to, the officer detailed him for special service, and he was ordered to slush the fore and main from the royal poles down to the mast heads. As the *Trade Wind* was plunging and rolling in the stiff north-easter which bore her name, it was a nice job, and with the lanyard of the full slush-pot around his neck, Luggy ascended the giddy heights of the fore, feeling sick at heart and revengeful.

The grease used for slushing down is not laid on with a brush, and absorbed as he was in his work upon the slender royal pole, Watson could not help but comment upon the peculiar quality of the fatty substance into which he was dipping his grimy paws.

"Blowed if I ever saw slush like that afore," he murmured. "Why the bleedin' stuff smells *nice*."

At the topmasthead, he stuck a finger into the

greyish mess and sniffed. "Now, where'n blazes 'ave I smelt that afore?" he ruminated, but he had reached the foretop before memory came to his aid. "'Oly ol' sailor!" he ejaculated in surprise. "I wonder if it is? It cawn't be." Coming down off the fore rigging, he slipped into the paint locker to replenish his pot, and when he came out again, there was a beatific smile on his battered countenance. "Sure enough!" he muttered, "That's jest what it is. I can see the squid beaks in it. 'Oly sailor!"

In a dense fog, the *Trade Wind* picked up the San Francisco pilot, and with a fair wind, she worked inside the bay and dropped her anchor, and the crew were turned up to furl sail for a harbour stow. The decks were cleared up, and they waited out in the fog for the tug to pull them alongside the coal dock.

In a port like 'Frisco, a windjammer inward bound does not remain long at anchor without visitors, and after the quarantine and customs had paid their calls, the denizens of the Barbary Coast came puttering out in motor launches, and boarding house runner and Hebrew pedlar came tumbling over the rail. Captain Ezekiel Smith made no attempt to stop them, and the mates remained apparently oblivious of the fact that sundry members of the crew were leaving the ship.

"Let them go," said the skipper. "They forfeit their wages." And he rubbed his hands pleausurably.

When the mate sung out for "All hands man the windlass!" some time later, he was disagreeably surprised to see Luggy Watson answering the hail.

"Ain't you gone ashore yet?" growled the officer indignantly.

"No, sir," replied the sailor; "but the others have."

The mate felt that he would like to give Mr. Watson some inducement to leave hurriedly, but the tow boats' crew were clambering aboard to hoist the anchor, and it would be bad policy to manhandle a sailor with so many strangers around.

"All right," he growled. "Turn to."

Within an hour they were alongside the coal dock and securely moored. The mates had slipped ashore for a drink; the cook and steward were aft in the pantry, and in the paint locker, Seaman Watson was busy filling a canvas clothes bag with greyish grease. He was very thorough about it, scraping the barrel clean, and so absorbed was he in his slush-gathering that he did not see the skipper stepping in behind him. "Oho, my man!" came a rasping voice. "Stealing the ship's stores, are you?"

Luggy turned around in a sweat of fright. "N—no, sir," he stammered. "I—I was jest a-goin' t' take a little o' this slush——"

"Aye," grated the skipper. "Stealing it—a jail offence. But I'll give you a chance, my beauty! You just skin along out of this and take your slush with you. That'll do for your wages due. Slide now, or I'll call a policeman."

And the sailor crawled humbly away, while the stingy skipper laughed to himself. "Great work!" he murmured. "All the crew gone, an' this fellow skinning off with fifty cents' worth of slush and leaving ten dollars in my pocket. It takes a man

like me to do high financing in the crew line." And feeling very pleased with himself he went into the cabin chuckling.

His beatific mood continued all next day, and the cannery sale was called off. A good paying lumber freight had turned up for the *Trade Wind*, and Ezekiel Smith had changed his mind. He was smoking a cigar and indulging in pleasant retrospections, when the Yankee mate burst unceremoniously into the cabin.

"Where's that slush we picked up at sea a while ago? Thar' ain't none left in th' bar'l——"

The skipper smiled. "I know it. That man Watson took it with him instead of his wages. I caught him stuffing a bag with it so I bluffed him ashore by saying I would have him jailed for stealing the ship's stores——"

"You did?" almost screamed the mate. "Then look at this!" And he laid a copy of the San Francisco *Examiner* before his astonished superior. Pointing to a paragraph, the mate read:

"Lucky find by a sailor. Ex-whaleman picks up a small fortune. John Watson, an able seaman off the British barque 'Trade Wind' just arrived from Newcastle, N.S.W., brought a bagful of ambergris to a well-known firm of druggists here in San Francisco. The stuff, which is a greasy, greyish substance said to come from the ejections of a sick sperm whale, was picked up by the man while the ship was becalmed on the equator. Watson, who is an old whaleman, identified the grease as ambergris, and as he had twenty odd pounds of it, he received five thousand dollars for his find."

"What?" shrieked the skipper. "Five thousand dollars! Is there any of it left?"

“Nary a bit,” replied the mate dolefully. “Slush-pots an’ bar’l hev bin scraped clean——”

“Can’t we get hold of this Watson?”

“No,” answered the other. “He’s gone east, so th’ paper says.”

Captain Smith nodded sorrowfully. “Say, Mr. Mate! Just you pull on your heaviest boots and kick me some place where it’ll hurt most——”

The mate sighed. “Aye, sir, an’ I’ll allow you t’ do th’ same t’ me!”

CAPTAIN DENMAN MITCHELL, of the Bank fishing schooner *Artimon*, was a high-line fisherman but a hard citizen. He loved two things—rum and money—and he hated pedlars—especially Tony Anderson.

Mitchell's fishing schooner *Artimon* was lying out in the bay with her mainsail up awaiting her skipper ere swinging off on a halibuting trip to Green Bank. The gang were all aboard and mostly congregated in the cabin looking critically over the bargains which Tony Anderson, a local pedlar, was displaying for their purchase. Tony was small, mean-looking, and red-haired, and came of a family that never was known to do manual labour of any kind but trucking and trading with the farmers and fishermen of the coast settlements. The plain-talking trawlers of East Harbour treated him with undisguised contempt, yet they willingly purchased the shoddy goods he had to sell and cursed him and their foolishness afterwards.

Tony had his gasoline motor-boat alongside and kept a weather eye lifting for Skipper Mitchell's coming. Tony didn't want to meet Mitchell for various reasons, but he felt that he had a good half-hour for business ere the hard-case Denman came aboard his vessel. “ Now jest look at this shirt,” he was saying as he held up a purple-coloured piece of flannelette decorated with em-

broidered flowers and pearl buttons. "There's a real bargain for a man as wants a dressy piece o' goods to go ashore and sport the girls in. Stout and strong enough for workin' in the dory too. Real flannel and hand embroidered. All wool but the buttons. What'll ye gimme for this beautiful, beautiful shirt?"

"Thirty cents," offered a man.

"Aw, come off, Boss! You're jokin' with me. I ain't out here for me health. A dollar'n half takes it. I ain't got another one like it and I can't get no more of them. Who wants this elegant shirt?"

"I'll give ye a dollar for it," said a fisherman, busy seizing on halibut hooks.

"A dollar?" Tony's face puckered up in disgust. "Gorry! I got to make a livin' somehow with me old father and mother and a wife and ten kids to home——"

"Jest listen to the little runt," cried the prospective purchaser. "Why yer ol' man has more dough than he knows what to do with and you ain't got no wife and kids——"

"Here—take the shirt," barked Tony. "Everybody cheats me. I'm makin' no money at that price——" He paused with ears straining. Then he blanched visibly and began to buckle his pack in agitated haste. A fisherman laughed. "By Golly, Tony, th' skipper's jest come aboard. Ef he catches you here . . . there'll be the devil to pay an' no pitch hot!"

He had hardly spoken when the huge bulk of Skipper Mitchell blocked the cabin gangway and he roared a command to get under way. Clattering down into the cabin with two rum bottles protruding from his coat pockets, Captain Denny

halted in surprise at the foot of the ladder and stared at the perturbed Tony with a saturnine smile on his hard-beaten visage.

"Say, you!" he rumbled slowly, addressing Tony. "You're the guinney that done me on that pair of rubber boots. Ye sold me a spavvy horse. Ye foisted a bar'l o' vinegar on me for a bar'l o' rum and a few other things. Didn't I tell ye to keep clear of this here vessel and never set foot on her again?"

"Aw, Cap'en, don't be hard on a man," pleaded Tony, nervously buckling a pack strap and hunting for a means of escape with a roving eye. "It was legit'mate tradin'. You bought with yer eyes open. 'Sides, Cap'en, you got back at me with that old mains'l ye sold me. Ye had it all wet inside when it was weighed and I paid ye for two hundred pounds o' water. I lost——"

"That ain't here or there," growled Mitchell thickly and favouring Tony with a baleful stare. "I told you to keep clear of this here vessel and now I find ye aboard in spite of what I said. Well, now, seein' you're so fond of hangin' around, I'll keep you aboard for a spell——"

"Aw, quit foolin', Cap'en," pleaded the pedlar as he made a move to ascend the ladder. "I'll go now——"

Mitchell grabbed him with one of his ham-like hands and yanked him back. "You'll go when it pleases me to let ye go!" he barked decisively. "I'll carry you out to sea and give you a long drift home." To the grinning trawlers, he said, "Heave short the anchor, boys, an' git the fores'l on her. Mister Anderson's a-goin' to take a little trip with us."

The pedlar squirmed and struggled to get free but Mitchell held him with a grip of steel. “Be quiet now or I’ll spank ye,” he threatened with a grim laugh. “I’ll set you adrift outside the Heads——”

“Don’t, Cap’en,” wailed Tony, still wriggling. “I ain’t got enough gasolene to take me home——”

“Then, pull home, consarn ye!” bellowed the skipper. “It’ll give you an idear of how we trawlers have to earn the money you git from us for yer dog’s-wool-an’-oakum trash. A ten-mile buck agin th’ tide ’ull do you good. Here, you rat! Git inside thar’ an’ keep quiet!” He hauled Anderson towards his berth, hove him, none too gently, inside, and slammed the sliding door.

“Now, me bully-boy,” he growled as he snapped the padlock. “You can’t git out ’less you eat through the bulkhead. Now, boys, we’ll git away to sea!”

With Tony’s little power dory towing astern, the *Artimon* swung out past East Harbour Heads with sheets off and all the patch of four lowers and the light sails hung. It was blowing a strong breeze offshore and when the schooner hauled away from the lee of the hills she began to feel the heft of the wind. Skipper Mitchell pawed the wheel and laughed to himself. “I sh’d let the little joker go now,” he murmured, “but I’ve a mind to give him a trip. Yes, sink me eff I ain’t got half a mind to take him down to the Cape and turn him adrift there. It’ll cost the little rat somethin’ in gas to git home.”

“Ain’t you goin’ to let Tony go, Skipper?” enquired a fisherman lounging on the house. “Gittin’ kinder rough out here.”

The skipper chuckled hoarsely and glanced at the straining tops'ls before replying. "'Deed, John, I have a good notion to fetch him down to the Cape with us. Yes, I will! I'll turn him adrift down off the Cape. Take the wheel! South by East!" And handing over the charge of the vessel, Mitchell went below to indulge in an outwardbound "nip" of rum. Unfortunately for Tony, the skipper did not stop at a single nip. If he had, Tony would have been released and allowed to depart. But rum always raised the devil in Mitchell, and by the time he had absorbed the best part of a bottle of "chain-lightning and barb-wire," he was all devil and ready for anything. "I won't set him ashore at all," he confided to the gang assembled below. "Swamp me, but I'll take him to Green Bank as spare hand and make a fisherman out of him. Ha! ha! Ain't that a good one, boys? Jest think of what the folks'll say! Shanghai-ing Tony Anderson an' makin' an honest fisherman outa him! Lord Harry, that's a good one, and to Green Bank he'll go as spare hand. H'ist that dory of his aboard an' stow it on the quarter. Ha! ha! That's some joke an' deserves a drink all round."

This was in the days before Scott Act and prohibition, and the *Artimon* had a hard-drinking gang aboard—a reckless, jovial crowd who lived hard and worked hard and who believed in getting all the fun there was to be got out of life—usually via the rum bottle route. As each man had brought aboard enough "wet oilskins" to float a ship and had broached their "life-savers" soon after sailing, the skipper found the crowd in the humour to back up his practical joke. The unfor-

tunate pedlar's pack was opened and the cabin gang helped themselves to the assorted contents and in liquorish good temper arrayed their persons in the flaring shoddy and cheap trash.

When the nauseated and indignant Anderson was released late that night, he rushed on deck to find the schooner slugging along to a strong breeze and a lonely light was blinking out of the darkness on the starboard quarter.

"What light's that? Where are we?" he asked of the grinning fisherman at the wheel.

"That's Pine Island——"

"Pine Island! Pine Island!" screamed Tony. "Jumpin' Jupiter! We're eighty miles from East Harbour——"

Mitchell's head and broad shoulders appeared in the companion-way and he boomed out with a hoarse laugh, "Aye, my bully, and it won't be eighty but seven hundred an' eighty miles from East Harbour ye'll be afore we weather up the jumbo."

"You big sweep!" yelled Tony, shaking his fist at the laughing skipper. "You think this is a joke, you overgrown bully? Wait 'til I get back to East Harbour. I'll sue you! I'll bleed you! I'll have your hide on my barn door for this——"

Mitchell lumbered heavily out of the gangway and advanced on the angry little pedlar. "Gimme any sass and I'll turn you adrift right now. You come aboard agin my orders. Now you'll stay aboard an' work yer passage. I'm a-goin' to make a trawler out of you and by the time you git back home you'll be thankin' me for l'arnin' you a good honest trade 'stead of talkin' about bleedin' an' suin' me. Now, there ain't no law outside the

three-mile limit but Denny Mitchell on this hooker, so git away for'ad and pick out a bunk for yerself afore I lift you up in my teeth and jump overboard with you. You're a trawler now—not a blame guff-slingin', dollar-grabbin' pedlar deceivin' honest men with yer pack of bull-wool and brown-paper trash."

Sea-sick and afraid of the big skipper's mood, Anderson crawled along the spray-drenched deck towards the forecastle. As he stumbled for'ard he found his little motor-dory securely lashed and stowed on the quarter and felt a little better at the discovery. Then, with many misgivings, he clambered down into the fo'c'sle where he was uproariously welcomed by the crowd bunking there. Like a mob of schoolboys on holiday, they chaffed and teased him good-humouredly until, observing his distress occasioned by the motion of the vessel, they knocked off and assisted him into a spare berth.

"Never mind, old sock," laughed big Bill Jennings. "You'll be all right in the mornin'. Then a good guzzle of pea soup and fat pork'll fix your stomick up and you'n me will go dory-mates afore the trip's over." And they left him to his mental and physical misery.

The next day was one of bitter travail for Tony Anderson. It started at the breakfast table where the skipper chaffed him unmercifully and prophesied all manner of unpleasant happenings for Tony when the vessel made the Banks. Unable to stand Mitchell's rough humour, the little pedlar fled to the deck and sat between the dories feeling very miserable. He felt still more miserable when he noticed the men lounging around clad in shirts, hats, and trousers which they had not paid for.

"Sufferin' cats!" he exploded savagely. "I'll make that hog of a Mitchell pay for this. I'll skin him alive and use his hide for a door mat! I'll squeeze him until he yells for mercy! I'll tie him up in knots! I'll tie——" He was so vociferous in his threats that he did not hear the skipper coming along the deck until Mitchell's great paw smacked him on the shoulder. "And I'll give you some practice in tyin'," he boomed with a jeering smile. "Aloft ye go, now, and tie up that main gaff-tops'l!"

Tony jumped up as if he had been shot. "No, no, Cap'en," he pleaded abjectly with a frightened glance aloft. "I was only jokin'. I can't climb up there. I get dizzy. I ain't no sailor——"

"Then I'll make a sailor out of you, or else dog-fish bait. Up ye go!"

"I can't! I won't! I'll fall an' break my neck, sure!" shrieked the pedlar. "Oh, don't be hard on a man, Cap'en. Ye've ruined me already by takin' me away from business——"

Mitchell sang out to some men loafing around. "For'ad here—some of youse! Tony's a-goin' to tie that there tops'l up, but he's too darn lazy to climb. Send him up on the stays'l halyards!"

Four of the grinning fishermen grabbed Tony, and knotting a bow-line out of an old dory-painter, they placed their struggling victim in it; hooked on the stays'l halyard block, and swayed him up. When clear of the deck and swinging, pendulum-wise, between the masts, Anderson ceased struggling but yelled and screamed in genuine terror.

"Sway him up!" growled the skipper's deep bass. "Up he goes! Hand over hand! Jumpin' Jupiter——!" There came a terrified howl from

Tony ; the men hauling on the halyard rolled into the lee scuppers in a heap as the bow-lines snapped and the pedlar plunged headlong from aloft into the sea.

“Hard down ! Out dories !” roared Mitchell as he leaped for the lee nest and cut the gripes with a bait-knife. In less time than it takes to relate, the gang tumbled for’ard and the top dory was over the rail and in the water ere the *Artimon’s* headsails began to flap.

“Where is he ? Kin ye see him ?” bawled the men in the dory as they shipped their oars.

“Dead aft—in the wake. His red nut’s ashown’ !” barked the anxious Mitchell. “Hurry, swabs, or I’ll have murder on me soul !” And with the perspiration breaking out on his hard visage the skipper watched the rescuing dory in frightened hopefulness.

Red hair is often regarded as an unwelcome inheritance by those who possess it, but it was the salvation of Tony Anderson, for, like a vermilion trawl-buoy, it could be discerned a mile away against the blue-green of sea. It wasn’t long before the dory came up to him and strong hands grasped the spluttering and exhausted man and pulled him in. Little the worse for his dip, Tony scrambled over the schooner’s rail, valiant with excess of rage.

Noting the fury in the little pedlar’s eyes, Mitchell forestalled an outburst of vituperation by starting in himself. “What in blazes d’ye mean by trying to commit soo-side ?” he roared. “Did ye think ye c’d swim ashore from here ? Lord Harry ! ye’ll be the death o’ me yet——” Tony recovered his breath, and, not to be intimidated, for two minutes he and the skipper had it out.

"You tried to murder me," yelled the little man, "and I'll have it in for you soon as we get in port. These men are all witnesses."

Mitchell's face grew serious. He was really alarmed and felt that his joking would land him in jail if he didn't placate the dripping fury threatening him with dire penalties.

"Now, now, my man, be reasonable," he growled soothingly. "'Twas only a joke an' maybe I kin square things up with ye——"

"Nawthin' will square me but five hundred dollars and puttin' me on th' land somewheres," howled Tony. "Do that and I'll say nawthin'——"

"Is there anythin' more y'd like?" enquired the other sarcastically. "You might mention it."

"Yes—you can give me some dry clothes. Your men tore my shirt to pieces pullin' me into the dory."

Mitchell had recovered from his fright by this time and his quick brain was working double-tides. His imagination suggested a plan which tickled his sense of humour, and, at the same time, offered to get him out of the penalties threatened by his victim. He made a gesture of resignation and said glumly, "All right, Tony, you've got me clinched. Come down in th' cabin and we'll fix things up. Come along, boys, and see fair play 'twixt me an' Mister Tony!" And followed by the wondering gang, the skipper and the bedraggled pedlar led the way aft.

"First of all," said Mitchell mildly, as he sat on a locker, "ye want some dry clothes. Unfortunately, none of my duds 'ull fit ye or I'd be only too pleased to rig ye out. But I cal'late some of the boys 'ull oblige. Jake! Jest gimme that shirt

you bought off Mister Anderson the other day. That's it! Now, Tony, here's a shirt that'll fit ye. How'll that do?"

"That'll do fine, Cap'en," said the other as he hugged the stove.

"Good!" rumbled Mitchell, examining the shirt. "That's a beautiful, beautiful shirt. All wool but the buttons. Real flannel and hand embroidered. How much is it worth, Jake?"

"I paid a dollar for it," replied Jake, "but Tony says it's worth a dollar'n a half."

"Well then, Jake, if Mister Anderson says it's worth a dollar'n a half, he shall have it for a dollar'n a half. Give Jake a dollar'n fifty cents, Tony, and you shall have the shirt."

Anderson's eyes opened wide in consternation. "D'ye mean I've gotter pay for that shirt, Cap'en?" he cried in amazement. "A dollar'n a half —?"

"Why, sartinly," boomed Mitchell indignantly. "Didn't Jake pay you for it? D'ye think Jake's a millionaire to be givin' his hard-earned shirts away for nawthin' and you able to pay for them? The idea! Give th' man a dollar'n a half."

"He only paid me a dollar for it," protested Tony.

"That don't matter. You said it's worth a dollar'n a half and it sure is. Ye couldn't buy another like that out here for five hundred dollars'n a half. This is sea-price, m'lad, and dirt cheap." And after an almost tearful argument on the pedlar's part, Jake received the money.

"Now," continued Mitchell when that transaction was completed, "ye'll need a good pair of trousers. A good pair of trousers—bull-wool and

jute—same's John got from ye. John! Fetch them pants out——"

"I don't want them!" yelled the victim. "You're bleeding me. You're a pack of thieves an' murderers. Your men have stolen all the things that was in my pack. Gimme——"

"Hold yer tongue!" bawled the skipper amidst the laughter of the gang. "Them poor fellers has got to pay for the grub you're eatin' aboard here. Ain't they a-goin' to git some return for feedin' ye? Ain't I seen ye stuffin' yerself on pork an' beans an' fried sassidges an' doughnuts an' coffee this mornin'? Lord Harry, 'twas a wonder ye didn't sink with th' heft o' grub ye loaded into yer stummick! Give John three dollars for the pants and then we'll talk business.

Tony submitted calmly and looked forward to a future reckoning. Five hundred dollars from Mitchell would amply repay him for all he had suffered.

"And, now, havin' fitted you out shipshape and trawler fashion," observed the skipper, "we'll discuss the landin' business. Ye want to leave us, I cal'late?"

"Yes!" growled the other sullenly. Mitchell reached into the back of his bunk; pulled out a chart and studied it for a minute.

"Umph!" he grunted finally. "Suppose I put you in yer dory within a few hundred feet o' th' land, d'ye think ye c'd make yer way ashore? That oughter be close enough."

"That'll do," said Tony. "But how about the five hundred dollars I want for compensation?"

Mitchell nodded gravely and knit his brows.

"Aye, I near forgot that. Well, then, I'll tell ye

what I'll do. I'll put ye within two or three hundred feet o' th' land in yer own dory, ef you're of the same mind about leaving us, and I'll give you my cheque for five hundred dollars to say nawthin' more about this business. Is that square ? ”

“ When will you land me ? ” enquired the pedlar cautiously.

“ Day after to-morrow ef all goes well,” answered the other.

“ It may be too rough,” said Anderson suspiciously. “ Maybe it won't be safe for me to risk it——”

“ Then I'll heave-to ontill it moderates,” replied the skipper. “ I'll give you a fair chanst. I ain't a tough guy—not near as hard as what you think. I've a soft heart, I have, and—and I'm kinder sorry for my foolishness. 'Twas the rum what did it, and I trust ye'll not say anythin' 'bout this affair when ye git ashore, for 'tis a dear joke. Five hunder' dollars is a lot o' money. Won't ye let me off easier'n that, Mister ? ”

“ Not a cent less,” said the pedlar decisively.

“ Then it'll have to be,” rumbled Mitchell with a sigh.

The gang were looking at one another questioningly and the business instinct in Tony predominated at the skipper's strange change in attitude. He was suspicious, but did not care to say so. “ Excuse me, Cap'en,” he said respectfully. “ Would you mind statin' them conditions again and have the men witness yer statement ? ”

“ They've all h'ard what I said,” rasped the other.

“ Ye-e-s ! But I'd like ye to say it again.”

"All right! Here's what I say. Within the next two or three days I'll put you in yer own dory within two or three hundred feet of the land——"

"What land?" queried Tony sharply.

"Canada or Newf'nland," snapped Mitchell. "I dunno what particular spot o' land it'll be. Whatever's handiest. So long's it's land you don't need to care. It won't be a rock or an island—I ain't no bluffer—so don't get so blame suspicious. I'll give you my cheque for five hundred dollars on the Bank of East Harbour afore you go. Is that fair? You'll witness them words, boys. That'll go in any court o' law. Here's my bank-book, Mister, ain't that right?"

Tony examined the pass book, noted the last amount, and nodded his head. "All right, Cap'en. That's a go! But what'll I do with my motor-boat 'way up here?"

"Sell it, consarn ye, sell it!" barked Mitchell, and with a string of oaths, he left the dumfounded occupants of the cabin and retired to his berth.

"Waal, by th' Great Trawl Hook!" ejaculated a man. "That's th' limit! I never knew Denny Mitchell to do a thing like that afore. I cal'late Tony's fallin' overboard has got him scared that he'll be hauled up for 'tempted murder when he gits ashore. That's th' reason beyond a doubt." And the others agreed with him.

Two days later, Captain Denman Mitchell squinted through his old quadrant at the sun; made some calculations with a nail upon the wheel-box, and jumped below for a glance at the Nautical Almanac and the chart.

"Shoot her up and take a cast!" he bawled from

the interior of the cabin, and a few minutes later, the leadsman sung out the depth. "Forty-four fathom and sand and shells on th' butter!"

Mitchell came up on deck. "All right, John. Weather up yer jumbo! Start yer mainsheet an' put yer helm down. Git th' gang out and bait th' gear. We've made the grounds, but, first of all, send Mister Anderson aft."

When the pedlar came up to where the skipper was pacing, the latter handed him a signed cheque for five hundred dollars. "Thar's my cheque. The boys'll put yer dory over. We're square—ain't we?" Turning to the men trooping aft, Mitchell said, "Git Mister Anderson's dory over. He's leavin' us now——"

"But—but—but where's th' land?" stuttered Tony fearfully. "I don't see it——"

"Of course ye don't," rumbled the big skipper, "but it ain't far off."

"Then where is it?" enquired the other peering around at the blank horizon.

"Forty-four fathom beneath us," cried Mitchell with a grin. "Six times forty-four is two hunder an' sixty-four feet. That's th' nearest land hereabouts. Go easy with Mister Anderson's dory, John! Use the stays'l halyards and th' dory-tackles. That's the idea. Now, Mister, ye have my cheque and there's yer dory over th' side. Two hunder an' sixty-four feet from here ye'll find land——"

"But it ain't dry land!" protested Tony in visible agitation.

"I niver said dry land," answered the skipper.

"Land was what I said and th' boys 'ull bear me witness."

"And where is th' nearest dry land?" whimpered the pedlar.

"Cape Pine, Newf'nland, lies 'bout a hunder miles no'the-east of here. Cape Breton's a sight further. Over ye go, now."

Advancing on the shrinking Anderson, the big skipper grasped him by the collar, and despite his kicks and howls swung him over the rail and into his dory.

"Beat it now!" he thundered viciously. "Ye've got my five hunder dollars and ye're within three hunder feet o' solid earth. Pull the plug out of yer dory and ye'll be on the bottom in the shake of a mains'l. Cast him adrift——"

"Oh, don't do that, Cap'en Mitchell!" wailed Tony pitifully. "Lemme stay aboard. I won't say nawthin'—honest I won't. Don't turn me adrift to starve or drown out here——"

"Naw!" bawled the other. "I don't want ye. When you git back ye'll raise all kinds of trouble for me. Take yer chanst. Th' sea's smooth and there's dry land a hunder miles no'the-east. Ef you come aboard here ye'll need to keep yer mouth shut and turn to and work for yer grub——"

"I'll do that, Cap'en," cried the pedlar eagerly.

"Shut yer trap and don't interrupt yer superiors!" growled Mitchell. "As I was asayin'—ye'll need to keep a shut mouth and work yer passage and pay yer passage as well."

"How much d'ye want?"

"Five hunder dollars!" boomed the skipper with a grim smile on his hard face. "Gimme my cheque back and ye kin come aboard. Refuse, and I'll turn ye adrift and let th' gulls and Carey

chickens have a feed on ye. Speak quick ! I ain't a-goin' to waste all day bargainin' with you."

Tearfully the little pedlar produced the slip of paper and handed it up to Mitchell. "There it is, Cap'en," he said with a quaver in his voice. "You're makin' game of me and I can't do nawthin'. I kin come aboard now, can't I ? "

"No, ye can't," returned the other. "Not until ye promise to say nawthin' 'bout what's happened aboard here. D'ye promise ? "

"I promise ! "

"Then come aboard," growled the skipper. "Ye'll work yer passage from now on, and as we're on the grounds we'll git th' light sails stowed away. Mister, you kin git that maintops'l tied up. You started the other day but ye didn't finish yer job. Spare hand's work is tyin' up tops'ls, so git busy."

Tony glanced apprehensively aloft to where the clewed-up gaff-tops'l bulged, balloon-like, half way up the topmast a hundred and ten feet from the deck. Shrinking back to the cabin house with terror in his eyes, he stared around at the hard, sea-bronzed faces of the assembled fishermen and in their countenances he detected no sign of pity. They were a hard-bitten crowd and any sign of squeamishness or cowardice awoke contempt instead of sympathy in their minds.

"Will I have to prod ye aloft with a trawl-splicer ? " came Mitchell's raucous bellow. "Move, damn ye, or I'll——"

While the little man was whimpering in fright and backing away from the skipper, the big, good-humoured fisherman, Bill Jennings, elbowed his way through the mob and faced Mitchell.

"Say, Skip," he drawled, "go easy on th' poor l'il beggar. It ain't everyone as can go aloft first time and tie up tops'ls. I couldn't do it myself when I first went vessel fishin'. Give him a rest. I'll tie it up—ef you really want it tied up——"

The other growled resentfully. "Suppose you mind yer own blame business."

Jennings turned to the men. "Boys," he said calmly. "This ain't man's fun stringin' a poor l'il minim like that. It's a swab's game. We're a rough bunch o' skates, I know, but I cal'late we ain't downright brutes. Let him alone!"

The hard-case features relaxed into sheepish grins and an apologetic murmur arose from the crowd. "Sure, Skip," they said. "Bill's right. Give the little runt a chanst."

With a lowering glance at Jennings, the skipper felt the pulse of the mob, and, being a diplomat, he burst into a loud gaffaw and slapped Tony heartily on the back. "Don't git scared, old timer," he rumbled. "I was only stringin' you. Now, boys, git yer gear out. We'll bait up and make a night set."

While Jennings was baiting up his trawls on the booby-hatch, a figure sneaked out from behind the dories and grasped his hand. "I'm only a poor devil of a pedlar," he said in heartfelt tones, "but I'll remember you. You—you're a man, Mister Jennings!"

"Tcha!" said the big fisherman with a laugh. "Run away or I'll bite ye!"

With his usual luck, Denman Mitchell worked Green Bank and scoffed nearly every halibut within the vicinity of his baited trawls. For eight days it was "oars up"; half-swamped dories and big

“jags” on the *Artimon*’s checkered deck. They made two sets a day, and in the evening, while the schooner jogged to the lighted watch-buoy marking the weather end of the fishing gear in the water, the men worked like slaves, bleeding, gutting, and icing the catch of fish.

With sixty thousand pounds of fresh halibut and twenty-five thousand of cod, Mitchell shot into Canso for a few tons of ice to top off the pens of fish in the holds below. Though they dropped anchor inside the harbour, Tony made no attempt to escape. If he wished, he could easily have done so as Mitchell used the pedlar’s gasolene dory to ferry the ice out to the vessel, and it was left, tied astern, during the time the *Artimon* lay in the port. The use of his dory for trucking ice was another injury which Anderson chalked up against Denny Mitchell.

Close to the *Artimon* lay a St. Servan fishing brig, and after stowing the ice below, Mitchell and a number of his gang went over to visit the Frenchman ere swinging off for East Harbour. Fraternizing with French members of the piscatorial community is commendable, but when North American trawlers pay visits to Breton brigs, it is not altogether with the spirit of *entente cordiale*, but rather with intent to procure cordial spirits. The plug tobacco, mittens, hooks, trawl becket lines and canned provisions which went with the *Artimon*’s crowd were exchanged for sundry bottles of a peculiarly fiery brand of tangle-foot which is distilled in France for the delectation of palates able to relish anything in the liquor line from pain-killer to sulphuric acid.

When Mitchell and his crowd tumbled aboard

hugging their bottles, all were the worse for their fraternal potations. It was a clear night with a strong breeze from the north-west, and after hoisting the dories aboard, Mitchell sung out to get under way. Under four lowers and dragging the star-board anchor under her fore-foot, the *Artimon*, with the skipper to the wheel, blundered through the fleet of Lunenburgers and Gloucestermen in the harbour, and swung out to sea.

With drunken sagacity, the big skipper pulled out a chart when they hauled clear of Cranberry Island, and laying his parallels on a crack which ran across its face, he bellowed out the course to the fisherman who relieved the wheel. Having completed all that he thought was necessary in the way of navigation, he and the majority of the crowd commenced broaching the *eau de vie* they had procured from the Frenchman.

It was blowing very hard and with all four lowers set, the *Artimon* dragged her lee rail through the smother at a fourteen knot clip. In a forepeak bunk, Tony kept himself in obscurity and frightened wakefulness, while aft in the cabin the gang passed the bottle and sang maudlin songs to the roaring and swashing of the sea.

At three in the morning, Jennings and his dory-mate came off watch and down into the forecastle. The good-humoured fisherman was practically sober but his dory-mate had to be trundled into his bunk the worse for wear. Then Jennings spied the pedlar's frightened face peering at him from behind the pawl-post.

“ I cal'late you're a-goin' to lose that there dory of your'n,” said the fisherman as he opened the quick-lunch cupboard. “ It's towin' astern—Lord

Harry, man, but you're as white as a ghost ! Come out and have a mug-up."

Tony crawled out. "They're all drunk, Bill," he stuttered, "and it's blowin' a gale——"

"Gale nawthin'," laughed the other, burying his face in a mug of coffee. "Don't worry, son. It ain't the fust time we've gone to sea with all hands pickled. I've seen this one pluggin' along with everythin' on her in a winter's blow an' devil a man able to stand on his feet. Let me give you a mug of coffee. 'Twill brace you up." He handed a steaming mug over to the nervous Anderson.

"Ain't the wind awful, Mister Jennings ? Look how the vessel's tumbling about."

"Nawthin' at all," replied the other. "Wait 'til ye're lyin'-to in a winter's breeze on some shoal water and ye'll know what tumblin' about is. I've seen 'em spill the coals out the stove sometimes. Aye, I've bin able to walk along the sides of the bunks—she was over so far—Crawlin' Christopher ! What's happened ?"

The scalding coffee shot up in his face ; Tony was catapulted into his stomach, and both men were hove down to leeward as the vessel fetched up in her headlong storming with a series of violent shocks.

"She's struck !" roared Jennings, jumping to his feet and making for the ladder. A deluge of water poured down through the opening and he was hurled back, gasping and spluttering. The four or five men bunking in the forecastle tumbled out of their pews, and with the sleep still in their eyes they rushed for the companion while the vessel lifted and pounded in the sea-way.

“ ’Tis Sable Island Nor'-west Bar ! ” shouted someone, and Tony was conscious of being hauled out on a sea-swept deck and dragged bodily aft. In the gloom, a cursing mob laboured getting the dories out, and above the thunderous flapping of the sails and the roaring of the white water which surrounded the schooner, came the skipper's voice, “ Stand by the vessel, boys ! Git th' sail off her——”

“ Stand by and be damned ! ” shouted a man leaping over the rail into a dory. “ Git out of this blazin' surf or we'll be swamped or washed away ! ” And the others followed him.

Clutching the coamings of the cabin slide, Tony stood almost petrified with terror, and he only came to his senses when a rough hand grabbed him by the shoulder and dragged him over to the lee quarter. “ Jump naow ! ” rasped a voice in his ear. “ There's yer dory. Wake up and crank yer engine while I fend her off ! Hurry, naow, for th' love o' Mike ! ” It was Jennings, and like a man in a trance, the other turned on the switch and gave the fly-wheel a pull. Put ! put ! put ! “ Is she started ? ” roared the fisherman, fending off with an oar.

“ Yes, she's started——”

“ Then git out th' way an' gimme th' tiller ! ”

Built for sailing in a chop, the pedlar's gasoline dory drew out of the inferno of surf into the smoother sea in deep water. Tony, scarce knowing what had happened, sat on the floor boards clutching the risings with both hands until Jennings snarled him into action with a string of biting oaths.

“ Bail her out, blast you ! She's half full of

water ! Show some life, you runt ! ” And the pedlar bailed as he never bailed in his life before.

“ How much gas have you got ? ” came the fisherman’s snapping voice.

“ Gas ? Oh, enough for a day anyway. Filled the tank at Canso to carry the ice.”

“ Darn lucky for us. ‘Vast bailin’ and watch that engine.”

“ Are we safe, Mr. Jennings ? ” Anderson dared not look over the gunwhale at the welter of sea in which they were tumbling.

“ Safe enough ef you keep that engine a-goin’. Gone coons ef you don’t ! ”

For over an hour, Jennings manœuvred the dory among the heaving combers, and when the dawn came, he could see five of the *Artimon*’s dories far to leeward when they rose on the crest of a sea.

“ They’re a mile to loo’ard,” he growled to Tony, who, with his head inside the little hatch, was jealously watching the chugging motor. “ We’ll run down to them.”

Running before the sea and wind, they speedily came up to the first of the dories with the skipper and four others in it. Mitchell was standing in the bow waving his arms and shouting something. “ What’s th’ racket ? ” bawled Jennings as he rounded up by the skipper’s dory.

“ Th’ vessel,” shouted Mitchell. “ Th’ vessel ! Look ! She’s come off th’ Bar ! ”

Jennings glanced in the direction indicated by the skipper and was astonished to see the *Artimon* standing out to the northward again with her sails drawing, and to all appearance sailing as if she had a crew aboard.

“ Git after her ! ” roared Mitchell. “ We’ve only

got one oar in this dory and the others are lyin' to their buoy anchors.”

For over an hour, the gasolene dory pursued the crewless schooner, and if the jib sheet had not carried away, it is doubtful if they ever would have caught her. When the sheet parted, the jib lighted up, and the mains'l jammed her up in the wind.

When they came alongside, Jennings leaped over the rail and hove the wheel down hard. Then he helped Tony aboard, and making the dory painter fast, swung off and picked up the others.

“Did you ever know the like?” ejaculated Mitchell when he got aboard again. “Came off Sable Island Bar herself. Shift o' wind and rise o' tide. Lord! but I'm th' lucky man. Thar's nawthin' can bust me. Is she makin' much water, boys?”

“Over the floors aft an' for'ad,” answered a man.

“Aye, aye,” said the skipper, “but she'll float to Canso, no doubt. Man th' pumps and git busy with th' draw-buckets in cabin an' fo'c'sle. We'll work her in and I'll give you fellers twenty-five dollars a man extry for salvagin' her——” He grinned and continued. “That is—all 'cept Tony here. He's a millionaire an' don't need th' money.” Tony said nothing but picked up a bucket.

Of the passage to Canso a great deal might be written. Of the weary hours of bailing and pumping the schooner to keep her afloat, a chapter teeming with incidents of endurance and perseverance on the part of tired men could easily be penned. But suffice it to say, the *Artimon* was picked up off Cranberry Head and towed into harbour by the Fishery cruiser. Until a place could be got ready for her on the marine railway,

a tug with a powerful pump relieved the *Artimon's* crew, and the halibut and cod were transferred to another vessel.

Mitchell was busy, very busy—much too busy to bother about Tony Anderson. Tony and his motor-dory had vanished soon after the schooner towed in and the crowd calculated that the little pedlar had had enough of seafaring to last him the rest of his natural life. Denman had dismissed Tony as a mere incident and he was telling a couple of newspaper men about the miraculous happening on Sable Island Bar when a pompous-looking person swung a leg over the rail and proceeded to tack a paper upon the schooner's main-mast.

"Say, you!" boomed Mitchell anxiously. "What th' blazes are you up to?"

The pompous person stared coolly at the truculent skipper. "You are Captain Mitchell, I presume?" he said calmly.

"Aye, that's me. What's th' game?"

"Your vessel is libelled for salvage."

"But there ain't no salvage in this case, Mister," growled the other with a confident smile on his hard visage. "I'm too wise for that. I made a dicker with the boys to bring her in for twenty-five bucks a head and they did it. You ain't got nawthin' on me, Mister Sheriff, so haul yer darned paper off'n my main-mast!"

"Here's a letter for you which may put a different complexion on the matter," said the official, handing Mitchell a legal blue envelope.

"Read it out!" snapped the big skipper. "I ain't no scholard."

The other opened the missive and cleared his

throat. “Ahem! This is from Skinnem and Taxem—a legal firm ashore here. It reads as follows:—‘Captain Denman Mitchell, schooner *Artimon*. Dear Sir: We are instructed by our client, Mr. Anthony Anderson, to attach your vessel for the sum of Four Thousand Dollars for services rendered to the fishing schooner *Artimon* by the said Anthony Anderson. We find the value of the vessel, gear, etc., to be in the neighbourhood of Nine Thousand Dollars and a rough estimate of her stock, which we have also attached, is approximately Three Thousand Dollars—making a total value of Twelve Thousand Dollars. As our client was not a member of your crew, nor upon Articles, and as you abandoned the vessel on Sable Island Bar, our client, using his own motor-boat, picked up the abandoned schooner. You also failed to include our client in the salvage agreement which you made with your own crew. In view of these facts, our client has a just and valid claim for the amount mentioned and suit is being entered against you for the amount afore-stated. A statement attested to by Mr. William Jennings has been made before the authorized officials in this port. Awaiting your reply, we remain, yours truly, Skinnem and Taxem, per J. H. Skinnem.’ That’s the letter, sir.”

For ten minutes, by any clock, Denman Mitchell gave vent to his feelings without repeating the same oath. Finally, he gazed sorrowfully at the letter and passed his hand over his head. “Oh, I’m a funny bird, I am! I’m the great lad for practical jokes! He’s got me poke-hooked, by cripes! Yes, poke-hooked! And as I’m the owner of this onlucky, consarned hooker, I’ll have to pay!

In future, there's two things Denny Mitchell 'ull steer clear of—and that's rum and shanghaied pedlars. Swamp me ! ”

Anderson runs a fisherman's outfitting store in East Harbour now, and the East Harbour *Echo* notes that “ Mr. William Jennings has gone into the clam business with a new motor-boat which he recently purchased.” Captain Denman Mitchell, of the fishing schooner *Artimon*, invariably loses his temper when the names of Anderson or Jennings are mentioned.

I FIRST noticed him eyeing the ship at a distance—a furtive scrutiny, as if he were afraid someone would catch him in the act. At first, I took him for an old watchman keeping guard over the deals on the dock, but latterly my curiosity was aroused by the manner in which he bobbed back among the deal stacks whenever our Skipper or any of the mates appeared on the deck or the wharf.

He was a very old man and he had all the earmarks of a sailor. I sized him up for that when he spoke to me at the head of the wharf one night. His gnarled right hand, holding the lapels of his ragged coat across his chest, had an eight-pointed star tattooed upon the back of it. Only sailors dare flaunt these barbaric decorations. Your landsman always keeps such weaknesses hidden.

A shore chum and I were yarning when the old fellow slouched into the glare of the arc-light. His feet, clad in sorry boots, scuffed with the drag of age; his shoulders had a hunched stoop proclaiming the curvature of years, while the lagging manner of his walk told of stiffened joints and muscles responding but slowly to the impulse of the brain.

He straightened up as he entered the circle of light and hearing our voices, he peered into the shadows where we sat. He stood for a moment irresolute as if he were debating in his mind how to

act. Then with something of a jaunty roll in his gait he came towards us. "'Night, mates," he ventured—somewhat apprehensively, I thought—and his smile revealed two stumps of teeth in the upper jaw which gave his speech a sibilant lisp. "Cold night, eh?"

"Aye, it's a bit chilly, friend," returned my companion.

The old man clutched his coat lapels tighter and shivered. His face was the colour of antique ivory—a yellowy white as though the blood-flush had receded from a tanned skin. I noticed that he had gold wire rings in his ears—a fancy of old-time seafarers.

"When's th' wind-bag sailin'?" he enquired after a pause.

"Finish stowing in the 'tween decks to-morrow," I replied. "Ought to pull out in two or three days."

"Any deck-load?"

"Not this time of the year—November—winter, North Atlantic. Not allowed going to England," I answered tersely.

"Sure, sure! I forgot," he said hastily and then half-fearfully. "You on her, sir?" (I laughed at the "sir." He took me for an officer.)

"Aye, I'm on her, but I'm for'ad. An A.B. shipped for the run from Halifax to Sharpness."

"Oh!" There was a sigh of relief in that "Oh!" He stood quiet for a moment as if thinking over his next move. Then he burst out. "Say, matey, put an old-timer wise. I want to git out of this here Halifax. I've tried to ship this two months past but none o' them mates or skippers'll take me. Say I'm too old. I ain't too old, mate. Only fifty-four, s'help me, and I can do me work—

hand, reef, steer, 'n' heave th' lead. I bin bos'un in big ships—wind-jammers. I know my book. Never shipped in steam—always th' wind-bags. Must git away now. I'm broke. Skinned to the ballast. Now, son, tell me! Have you got yer crowd yet?"

There was a note of pathetic appeal in his lisping voice—a hoarse supplication. Fifty-four? The aged liar was seventy-four if he was a day, but these worn-out shell-backs always lie about their age. I wouldn't blame any mate or master for not signing him on. He was too old for work in a sailing ship—especially a timber drogher making a winter passage of the Western Ocean.

"We've ten hands to get yet," I replied.

He gave a series of pleased nods at the information. "Now, tell me, son," he said, lowering his voice into a lisping whisper. "Who takes the hands on? Th' skipper or th' mate?"

"The mate."

He grunted. "Is that th' feller with th' red moustache? Wears a grey sweater coat and a green felt hat?"

"That's him," I answered, and I thought to myself, "You've been watching the ship pretty closely to have got the mate's description down so pat."

"Now, tell me, son," he enquired in the same eager whisper, "d'ye think he'll gimme a chance? I ain't too old, y'know. Only fifty-four. Bin sick—roomatic fever—all right now . . . spry as ever. What's my chances?"

"You're pretty weak-looking," I ventured. I was going to say "old-looking," but changed my words.

He straightened his shoulders back and slapped his chest. When he released his coat lapels I saw that he had no shirt on—nothing but a cotton singlet and it was November and chill. “Weak-lookin’?” he almost shouted. “Why, damn yer eyes, young feller, I’ll tie up a lee yard-arm and be layin’ down afore you’ve got a gasket passed on th’ weather one; and you know all th’ weight’s to loo’ard. Weak-lookin’ be damned!” he said, instantly mollified. “I reckon I *look* weak, but I bin sick. Malaria, y’know. Got a touch one-time . . . Congo River. Now, tell me, m’lad! When’s th’ best time to see Mister Mate? Just after breakfast, ye say? Good! I’ll see him in th’ mornin’.” He clutched his ragged coat again. “Say, pal, you’ll do an old-timer a favour and you won’t tip th’ mate off about me.” He spoke half-fearfully. “You won’t tell him that an old crock is goin’ to ask him for a chance in th’ mornin’? I’m only fifty-four, s’help me, I am, an’ fifty-four ain’t old for a sailor. And, pal,” his voice held a half-shamed appeal, “lend me a dollar to git a shirt ’n a bite ’n a haircut. I’ll pay ye back—honest, I will—but I got to have a hair-cut.” He half-raised his shabby soft hat and revealed a head thinly covered with snow-white hair. “I’ll have to take off me hat, maybe, when I see yer mate, and if he sees me hair he won’t believe I’m only fifty-four and he might turn me down. A dollar’ll fix me up fine.”

There was something so irresistibly pathetic in the man’s plea—a wistful cajoling that brooked no refusal—that I parted with a dollar. He accepted it with a murmur of thanks—not the servile mumblings of the professional pan-handler—but rather

the terse acknowledgment of one who hated to beg. I felt no reluctance in giving the old fellow the money, even though it left me with but fifty cents to tide me over till sailing day.

He jammed his hat well down over his head and clutching his coat tighter over his ill-clad chest, he shuffled around and faced the chill wind. "Well, so long, boys. I'll shove off now and I'll see Mister Mate in th' mornin'." And he slouched into the darkness with a sad attempt at a jaunty bearing to which his ancient frame refused response.

My companion laughed. "You're easy," he observed. "You'll never see him or your dollar again." But he was a landsman and with all of a landsman's suspicion. He noticed that the man did not address him in his plea for money and remarked upon the fact. "He knew he could get it easy out of a sailor. He didn't try to work *me*." He concluded with a sophisticated "Huh!"

"No," I returned slowly; "he wouldn't ask *you* for money. He's a *sailor*. I'll see him again." My shore friend, never having slept or eaten in a ship's fo'c'sle, did not comprehend the niceties of seafarer's charity. A sailor will beg and borrow from sailors, but would scorn to do so from landsmen. There is an excess of delicacy in such matters that only seamen can understand.

I looked for him around the deal stacks early next morning, for I had a notion to invite him into the fo'c'sle and give him a bite to eat. But he wasn't in sight anywhere, though I surmised that he slept somewhere in the timber. Breakfast was served in the cabin at eight and the mate invariably smoked a cigarette, lounging in the main-deck entrance to the cabin, immediately after the meal.

The mate carried out his habit according to schedule and I glanced up the wharf for a sign of my old friend of the previous night. From amongst the longshoremen on the dock, he finally appeared and I saw him sight the mate under the poop-break. He came along the wharf with a jaunty swing and as he neared me I noticed that he had a muffler around his neck and that his hair was cropped close. The lagging step was gone and his shoulders were straightened a little, but he could not disguise the stoop. However, a good many sailors carry a stoop—the trade-mark of years of bending and hauling—and it would probably pass notice.

He ignored the gangway amidships and walked abreast of the poop-break. The mate was regarding him idly and the old fellow noticed it. He imperceptibly charged his gait with more spring and leaped easily from the dock-string-piece to the ship's topgallant-rail. Along the rail he walked for a few steps and then swung down to the poop ladder and to the deck. I was working at the after-hatch and watched events with genuine curiosity—the more because of the pity of the ancient sailor's carefully planned strategy.

As he approached the officer, I noted a flush in his cheeks and a brightness in his faded blue eyes which told of stimulant. The man had evidently rejuvenated himself with a few stiff drinks ere coming down. The jaunty carriage bespoke artificial impulse.

"'Morn, Mister Mate," he said with a confident timbre in his voice. "Need a hand, sir?"

The officer looked keenly at him and the old fellow stood as erect as a soldier on parade under the scrutiny.

"You're pretty old," observed the mate quietly.

"Fifty-four, sir," replied the other quickly, "'n' jest as spry, sir, as any you got for'ad. Got fever, years ago. . . . Gulf of Siam trade . . . aged me up, sir. You'll find me able enough, sir, when there's seaman's work to be done."

The other grunted.

"Let me see your last discharges!"

The man fumbled in an inside pocket and produced a bundle of soiled papers. From amongst them he produced the familiar blue-covered Discharge Book of the British Board of Trade. The mate took this and turned the pages slowly. From the vicinity of the after-hatch I watched the proceedings with almost as much trepidation as the old man, and I inwardly prayed that his last skipper had paid him off with a "V.G." for ability and conduct.

"You came out in the *Glen Corrie*—a one-time Scotch ship—three months ago——" remarked the officer. The other tried to avoid the coming question and parried hastily. "Yes, sir. A fine ship . . . one of Steele's old Australia-men. Th' Norwegians have her now, sir. Fine ship to handle . . . steers like a witch. I——"

"Why didn't you stand by her?" the other questioned, ignoring the interruption.

"Took a fancy to work ashore, sir. Been riggin' schooners, sir. I'm a dab at riggin', sir. Splice any kind o' wire, sir——" He was extolling his abilities and avoiding the truth. He was probably landed from his last ship into hospital—coopered up and worn out. Norwegians had no use for ancient seamen unable to stand the grind.

The officer handed the book back and lit another

cigarette. "You're pretty weak-looking," he remarked. I gave a mental start at the designation. I had used the same term to cover a harsher word and I felt instinctively that the mate was doing the same. There is a kindly delicacy among sailors.

The aged sailorman slapped his chest with the same indignant motion of the night before. "Me, sir?" he barked. "Me, weak?" He glanced around as if to find something to prove his strength. Then he made a bold bid. "I ain't as spry as a boy, maybe, Mister, but I'll shin up the main there an' reeve a halyard through th' truck right now, sir!"

The mate smiled and looked him over and the other stood as if ready to run for the main-rigging and nip aloft.

Our mate wasn't an impressionable fellow by any means. He demanded a lot from his crowd and believed in hard work—with the accent on the "hard." Lazy men and shirkers received scant mercy at his hands. But the mate must have had a kindly impulse that morning. He finally threw his cigarette away and said, "All right. I'll take you as an A.B. Be at the Shipping Office at two o'clock. I think I'm a damn food to carry an old crock like you, but I'll give you a chance."

The aged shellback's pride seemed nettled and he straightened up again. "I ain't no 'old crock,' mister. I can do my work. I bin bo'sun in big ships—wind-jammers—four-masters an' twenty-eight hundred tons. I bin——"

The officer made a gesture of dismissal. "All right. I believe you. Shove off now and be at the Shipping Office at two." And he entered the cabin. The old sailor caught my eye and favoured me with

a knowing wink. It said a lot, that wink. He glanced seaman-like around the decks and aloft at the rigging and spars. Then with a satisfied nod to himself, he made for the gangway and on to the wharf.

The last deal had been stowed below decks and we had hauled out into the stream to prepare for sailing when my elderly friend came aboard. A motor-boat ran him out and he scrambled up the Jacob's ladder along with two or three other hands. When he came into the fo'c'sle he was lugging an attenuated canvas sea-bag and by the look of him he was more than half drunk. Spying me, he lurched over and held out a crumpled dollar bill. "Here y' are, son," he lisped slurringly. "Thank ye kindly. 'M all ri' now."

But he didn't look all right. The eyes of him burned feverishly and there was a hectic flush on his ivory-yellow cheeks and once or twice I noticed him spitting blood. The new hands were quarrelling about the choice of bunks when he interrupted. "Stow yer jaw, you men," he commanded truculently. "You fellers'll take what I leaves. I'm takin' this pew here." And he threw his cap and bag into the best located of the bunks under dispute.

"Th' noive of de old guy !" ejaculated an ordinary seaman. The old man whirled on him. "Belay yer bazoo, you !" he barked threateningly, "or I'll put a stopper on it myself. It's a dam' fine time o'day when young cubs like you have so much to say. I've had more salt water on my oilskins than you ever sailed on, so, shove off, or I'll mark ye !" The fierceness of the old man's visage cowed the other and he made no reply. But Williams

(that was his name) was wound up to talk and he held forth to the crowd at large. "In my day," he grumbled, "no ruddy ord'nary seaman was allowed to open his trap when A.B.'s were around. 'N when I was in the *Ariel* in the ol' days, the ord'naries was jest fetch'n-carry lads to us A.B.'s. Mind the *Ariel*, you fellers? I reckon not! You wasn't thought of then. China clipper she was 'n I was in her. Mind th' big race? *Taeping*, *Serica*, *Fiery Cross*, *Taitsing*, 'n *Ariel* . . . ninety-nine days from the Pagoda anchorage at Foochow to the Downs. That was sailin', m'lads."

I pricked up my ears at his talk, and being something of a student of nautical history, I recognized the names of the ships and the race he was referring to—the famous tea-clipper race of 1866, when the five ships mentioned left Foochow almost together and arrived off the Downs in the English Channel within a few hours of one another! And Williams boasted of being an A.B. in the *Ariel*—winner of the famous contest! And that was forty-eight years ago and he swore his age was fifty-four! I felt that my estimate of seventy-four was about right. The poor old devil!

The liquor in him had loosened his tongue and he was lisping valiantly. "You fellows don't know what sailarin' is nowadays," he continued scornfully. "Stuns'ls, Jimmy Greens, save-alls, water-sails, an' ring-tails . . . ye never heard o' them, I'll bet. 'N I was in th' best of them! Western Ocean packets, West Indiamen, China clippers, Cape Horners, an' Australian wool-clippers . . . I sailed in 'em all in my day. I was in th' old *Thermopylae*, I was, when she run from Melb'un in sixty-three days. I bin in th' *Cutty Sark*,

I bin bo'sun in Blue Nose ships—tough packets where a man had to be a sailor or th' mates made shark's meat out o' you! Yes, I bin through th' damned mill, I have, 'n there's no swankin' ord'nary seaman what's goin' to give me any chin!" And he glared fiercely at the young fellow again.

He opened his sea-bag and turned it up. A dilapidated suit of yellow oilskins—picked up on a fish-wharf by the look and smell of them—and a thin grimy blanket fell out. He had nothing else. He hung the oil skins up alongside his bunk and hove the blanket into his sleeping box.

"You haven't much of a kit," I remarked to him quietly.

He nodded slowly. "Aye! A parish rig, son, but it'll do me, I reckon. I won't need 'em long." He lisped the words so low that none of the others heard, but the significance of it impressed me.

Next morning we got our anchor and towed out to sea and the tug let go the hawser off the Sambro light-ship. When making sail, old Williams was invariably the foremost hand at a halyard or brace and the ablest men gave way to him. When he came panting up to a pulling or hauling job we always gave him a "fore-all" place even though he was so weak that one could hardly feel his weight on the rope. Occasionally he would sing out the hauling time in a hoarse, cracked voice—an "E-yah! O hah! Hey-yah!"—but he generally had to knock off for want of breath. He essayed a chantey on the t'gallant halyards one day, but it was so ancient that no one could sing the chorus. The poor old man was living in the past.

As the time passed he seemed to age visibly. One could almost see him shrivelling up. His motions

were daily becoming more feeble and the only thing about him which showed a spark of vitality was the fire in his eyes. His speech even became more shrill and there was a querulous quaver in it. Matching the fierce glare in his eyes, his temper became fiery. He cursed everyone and criticized everything in a kind of petulant contempt.

We were hauling aft the main-sheet one day in mid-Atlantic when he collapsed and fell to the deck. He tried to rise to his feet and tally on, but couldn't muster the effort. "Carry him into his bunk," ordered the mate kindly, "and let him stay there!"

"Bunk be damned, mister!" shrieked the old fellow. "I'll be all right with a little shot o'rum, mister. I jest took a faint spell." But the officer noticed the red trickle at the corner of Williams' mouth and motioned us to carry him forward. We laid him in his bunk to the accompaniment of his shrill curses and there was no more heft to him than to a child.

The skipper ordered the steward to give him milk and rum and soft food. He drank the liquor but refused to touch the boiled rice and tapioca. "Think I'm a damned baby," he piped viciously. "You've a damned cheek to offer me that muck, you damned stew-pot walloper!" He condemned the steward to all eternity.

All that night he raved and shouted of long-forgotten ships and the men who sailed them. The famous clippers of fo'c'sle story were mentioned in his talk—*Leander*, *Sir Lancelot*, *Cairngorm*, *Stornoway*—brave ships of brave days. One moment he fancied he was setting a topgallant stud-sail and shouted commands long forgotten in sail of to-day; another time he was cautioning a

phantom mate at a lee-wheel when running the Easting down in the Southern Ocean. "Meet her, bully! Don't let her swing! Never mind squint-in' at th' big sea astern. Watch th' ship!"

He lay thus for many days until we met up with a dirty easterly roaring out of the British Channel. All night long we stripped her in the rain and bitter wind until we had her snugged down and lying-to under fore and main lower-tops'ls and foretop-mast stays'l. With the coming of the gale, old Williams seemed to revive and when I looked in at him at four bells in the morning watch, he asked for a mug of coffee. I brought him the drink and asked how he was. "Better, son, better," he croaked. "But I ain't agoin' to set foot on shore again. I'm goin' out this time . . . on deep water. No more shore for me. I'm through with it. Done with it. I was always all right at sea. Th' shore has burned th' guts 'n th' heart out o' me. I made my money at sea and I spent it ashore. Th' rum, son, th' rum. Sixty years at sea, m'lad, an' here I am with niver a home or a wife or a dollar. A suit o' rags, a blanket, 'n a bunch o' discharges—that's all to show for it. But I've had my fun, son. I don't regret it. I sailed in th' best and th' worst. I know seafarin'. Sixty years an' never in steam. Always in th' wind-bags. Never in steam, so, d'ye hear? Never in steam. No steam-boats for Jim Williams."

I left him then and went on deck. He gave me something to think about. Sixty years at sea! A long time, truly. Old Williams had seen the life as it was in the roaring days of the clipper sailers. Sixty years . . . and he had nothing but his memories. He would be the last of them—the stun's'l

shellbacks—the men of iron who drove the wooden ships. Nowadays the ships were iron and the men were wood.

It blew hard and dirty all day and the dark came down with the ship tumbling in a heavy sea and the wind screaming in the gear aloft as she rolled to windward. We were standing-by in the donkey-boiler house sheltering from the rain and wind when there came a thunderous slatting from aloft. The noise brought us out on deck as a great length of chain-sheet came rattling down, and up in the blackness one could hear the flogging of canvas and the slashing of a chain on an iron yard. Sparks of fire followed each metallic slash and someone shouted, "Weather sheet of th' main-tops'l has carried away!" The mate's whistle shrilled in the noise and the man who had answered it came for'ard. "Man th' weather gear!" he bawled. "Clew her up and make fast!"

The crowd of us tallied on to the bunt-lines and clew-lines and hove the weather-side of the sail up to the yard and then clawed our way up the weather rigging with the wind disputing our climbing and the rain slashing at our oilskins. We gained the lower-tops'l-yard, the whole watch of us, and strung out on the foot-ropes to fist the wet canvas, full of wind, and bellying back over the spar. It was as black as the inside of a sea-boot aloft and you couldn't tell who was next to you.

I was tugging away at the weather-yard-arm when I was conscious of a body squeezing in alongside of me. I had just taken a turn with the gasket and shouted to my neighbour to reach down under the yard and pass the end of the gasket up to me again. A querulous voice answered. "All

right ! All right, I'll get it ! ” Peering for the first time at the figure now crouching down on the foot-rope reaching for the gasket, I was astonished to make out the form of old Jim Williams !

When he stood up again I shouted in his ear, “ Get down ! Get down ! You'll be falling to the deck ! ”

He was lying over the yard with both hands grasping the iron jack-stay. His head was bare—I could see his white hair in the gloom—and he had neither boots nor oilskins on. His coat and pants were bellying and flapping in the wind. He lay motionless.

I made my gasket fast in double quick time that I might attend to the old fellow. I was afraid that he had gone out in the effort of climbing aloft and lying out on the yard, but when I shook him gently by the shoulder, he lifted a hand from the jack-stay as if in protest and his thin voice piped faintly, “ All right ! All right ! ”

With some of the hands called down from aloft we got him between us and in some fashion carried him in to the top. Then a husky Dane shouldered him and carried him down on deck, where the mate met us.

“ What th' devil's happened ? ” he shouted.

“ Old Williams got aloft and he's all-in ! ”

The officer peered at the sodden bundle of humanity over the Dane's shoulders. “ Well, I'll be scuppered ! ” he ejaculated. “ The old Turk couldn't stay below when there was work to be done. Carry him in the fo'c'sle and I'll try and get a tot of rum for him.”

We laid him in his bunk and he lay like one dead. His eyes were closed and he was breathing

very, very faintly. There was the ominous blood trickle at the corners of his mouth. Old Williams would never leave his bunk alive. We could see that.

The mate came in with a tumbler of rum and we lifted up the old man's head and managed to force a little of the spirit between his lips. He gave a sigh and murmured, "Rum!" It was as though he were invoking the deity that had cursed his existence. We gave him one or two more sips and he opened his eyes and stared at us. The fire had gone from them now and they were dulled with the approach of death. Weakly, he motioned with his hand. "Rum!" he gasped, and we gave him another swallow.

He saw me leaning over him and grasped my wrist. Feebly drawing me nearer, I sensed his wishes and bent my head to his. "I'm slipping my cable, son. Goin'—out—with—th'—tide." He gasped and continued, "I—shipped—to—die—in—a—wind-bag—" another gasp, "in—deep—water." We gave him another sip. "My—last—job—weather—tops'l—yard—like a proper—sailor—man." His eyes closed and we thought he was gone, but he drew me to him again—very feebly, this time.

"Stitch me up . . . piece old sail . . . fisted many a time. Have—sails—make—neat—job. So . . . long!" He turned on his side with a convulsive shudder and went to meet the Great Pilot.

We dropped him over-side in the grey morning. The mate, who was a real sailor, acceded to his last request and furnished the sailmaker with a piece of old topsail canvas to fashion a shroud for the

dead man. The Finnish sailmaker wielded his palm and needle with neatness and care as though the soul of the departed was standing-by to see that a proper seaman-like job was made in covering the dead clay.

And at eight bells, when the body lay on a grating placed on the rail, a rift appeared in the leaden clouds and a ray of sunshine threw a golden beam on the flag which covered the dead. It seemed as though the solar orb was paying a tribute to the passing out of that ancient sailorman and throwing a spot-light on the Red Ensign—the old red duster of Britain's Merchant Marine—under which he lay and under which he sailed . . . for sixty years.

I—I AM LUCKY TO FIND A BERTH

It is with some little trepidation that I start in spinning this yarn, because I have an instinctive feeling that it will be ridiculed and curtly dismissed as being what old sailors would call "a twister." When a man has been kicked out of a Consul's office and designated as a "crazy shell-back"; when he has been laughed at and called ugly names; when his most solemn oath has been the subject for incredulous jeers and his character as a sober citizen is doubted, he naturally becomes apprehensive in opening up afresh an affair which he has tried hard to forget.

My position at the present time is such that my connection with the affair would not redound to my credit, and I have no desire to lose caste by coming out under my own name and relating the circumstances as they actually happened. One man believes me, and it is with reluctance that I concede to his request and give to the world a secret which has rankled in my mind for many, many years. A sensitiveness to the shafts of ridicule has always been the weak point in my armour, but by employing fictitious names of persons and vessels concerned, I shield myself from being made a target for personal remarks of a derisive and satirical nature.

Somewhere or other I read of a man who related

the story of his life to a party of friends. He was a jolly sort of fellow and his story was a heart-rending one, but on its conclusion the audience were convulsed in laughter and refused to believe that his tale was true. I regard myself in the same light, and being an old sailor, my narrative, like that of the humorist, will probably be taken with a grain of salt. Go ahead, dear reader, and take it whatever way you like. I know it is real enough to me.

I was born and brought up in a little coast town in the Pine Tree State, and, like a good many down-east youngsters, I broke away for sea at an early age. After two or three years' hard grinding in the mill of 'foremast experience I came out "ground and bolted," but my parents having died while I was learning to hand, reef, and steer, I was left to work out my own traverse in life. After a bitter time in some hard craft, I gained a master's certificate in Liverpool. And when the Civil War broke out, I shipped as second mate aboard cotton ships running the blockade into Wilmington and Charleston. Though a Northerner in sympathy and by birth, I, with many others, was captured by a Federal cruiser and promptly "jugged." After two months' confinement, I escaped and lived very precariously for a lengthy period, and in November, 1886, was in New York—stranded.

The period of depression after the war had set in and business was bad in the United States then. Everybody was retrenching; money was scarce and employment was scarcer. The *Alabama* and Confederate privateers had practically destroyed the American merchant marine and, with the stagnation in shipping which prevailed, starving

sailormen loafed around the waterfront, sleeping in warehouses and living on the bounty of more fortunate shellbacks aboard the vessels. Every boarding-house on South and Water Streets was crammed with seafarers ready to sign away their liberty for a year without remuneration as long as they could fill a gnawing stomach.

Among this crowd of destitutes, I was one of the fortunate ones, having been taken in by Dennis Sullivan after spending a week or two "living in the street and boarding in the market." Sullivan, familiarly known to sailormen as "Hash" Sullivan, ran a boarding-house on Oliver Street, and a worse "sailor-robber" never drew breath. He was Irish and a "plug-ugly" for looks, and his cognomen came from the form of diet which was the *pièce de résistance* at his establishment.

When I blew into Hash Sullivan's my whole worldly possessions consisted of my clothes and a sheathknife. The clothes, for convenience' sake, I carried on my back; they consisted of an old felt "bucko" hat, a woollen shirt, a pair of tar-stained dungaree pants, and a pair of "slip-shods"—sea-boots with the uppers cut off. Socks I didn't have. The knife and sheath were supported around my waist by a strap which originally formed part of a horse's harness, but when Sullivan saw it, he promptly took it away from me, saying:

"Young fellow, I wouldn't wear that belt. There is nawthin' looks so well on a sailor as a good smart rope-yarn."

So my clothes and knife were afterwards held together and supported by a piece of marline, and my belt went to fit out some other poor devil outward bound.

I lived a good three or four weeks at Sullivan's, and during the whole of that time I scoured the docks looking for a ship. Masters and mates I interviewed by the score. Some civilly declined my services, while others, tired of being importuned by the hosts of desperate sailormen thronging the wharves, kicked me off their decks with curses and bitter oaths. It was a miserable time; cold receptions and cold weather for a half-clad man, and I think if I had remained ashore any longer than I did, I would have thrown myself off the dock and ended my misery.

I considered myself unusually fortunate when the master of an English ship bound for Australia came along to the boarding-house and picked me out to make up his crew. Though I was a qualified navigator and holding a "lime-juice" ticket for competency as master mariner, I was only too glad to stick my fist on the articles of the ship *Magician* as an able seaman at twenty-five dollars a month and two months' advance. My fifty dollars was to be paid after the ship had sailed, and Mr. Sullivan took the note "in payment for board, lodging, and outfit," giving me a dollar to "blow" myself with before I went aboard.

The dollar provided a few schooners of beer for my less fortunate companions at the boarding-house, and with a dirty canvas bag containing my outfit—a sackful of straw known as a "donkey's breakfast," shirt and pants made of "dog's wool and oakum," a nondescript blanket and a pair of second-hand sea-boots—I, with the others, was escorted aboard the ship by Sullivan's roughneck runners and taken in hand by the mate.

A towboat hauled us down the harbour and into

the bay. We were turned to rigging out the jib-boom, setting up the headgear, and straightening out the rigger's snarls. Two days later, we hauled out to Scotland Lightship and made sail, and if ever a crew of shellbacks chantied up topsail halyards lustily, it was the *Magician's* crowd.

I was something of a chanteyman myself, and I felt so good at smelling salt water again and feeling a ship's deck under my feet that I sang and chorused for the sheer joy of being outward bound. By the aid of muscles and "Whisky Johnny," "We're All Bound to Go!" "Blow the Man Down," and "Santa Anna Won the Day," we mast-headed the yards and sheeted home until we had all the muslin flying and braces strung, and the big Australiaman was punching along with the lee froth bubbling in the scuppers and licking over the topgallant rail.

II—I HAVE A FALLING OUT

When a man has been "on the beach" for a long spell, he appreciates being at sea again. New York and starvation seemed like a bad dream, and I was looking forward to a good time on the *Magician*. Her skipper seemed a very fine sort of man, and the mates were as good as sailors will allow mates to be. The grub was "lime-juicer style"—not much of a variety, but it was of good quality and the bread barge was always filled without question. Plenty of biscuit meant plenty of those favourite sea dishes, cracker hash and dandy-funk.

The voyage also would be a lengthy one—New York to Melbourne, *via* the Cape, and Melbourne to England by way of the Horn—and though I

was serving in a subordinate capacity, yet I was glad to do it and happy in the thought that I had shelter and food for a year at least.

With a roaring westerly blowing over the quarter, we stood away to the east'ard on the old deep waterman's track to pick up the north-east trades for a shoot across the Line, and I can remember, after my trick at the wheel, how delighted I was with the ship's running qualities and the easy manner in which she steered. This is quite an important thing on an Australian voyage, where over four thousand miles of easting is run with square yards and a heavy sea. Sailors have no use for a vessel that is likely to prove a "terror" when running the easting down.

We dropped the land astern that morning. During the day the wind held strong and we sailed "at the rate of knots" with a mainskysail set. Towards nightfall the wind hauled southerly with fog. When I came on watch at four next morning, the ship was pitching and rolling in a lumpish sea, while fog shrouded everything. The wind was coming away squally, and when our starbowlines mustered aft, the second mate passed the word, "In royals and flying jib!"

We manned the royal gear and clewed up the sails, and while some of the watch went aloft to furl, I and two others went for'ard on the fo'c'sle head to tackle the flying jib. The fog was very thick—so thick that it was impossible to see the flying jibboom from the cathead. I can remember, after we had slacked away on the halyards and manned the downhaul, the second mate coming for'ard and singing out to the three of us:

"Come aft here, some of you, when you git that

jib down. Git the horn for'ard—it's gittin' thicker'n pea soup."

I gave my two mates a nudge.

"Run along," I said. "I can muzzle that pocket handkerchief all right."

And while they made their way aft, I clambered over the bows and out to where the flying jib was bellying and slatting around in the breeze.

We carried one of those old-fashioned sky-raking bowsprits protruding very far out over the water, and by the time I reached the flying jibboom footropes, the vessel was blotted out in the thickness of the vapour, while the horn came through the veil in a pitifully feeble drone. As I listened to the roar of the bow wave beneath and the scarce-heard wail of the horn, and saw the dim halo of our lights, I thought it would be just the kind of morning for a bad collision. The notion made me shiver and look around apprehensively, but the slatting jib gave me little time for thoughts of that nature. Clambering up the stay I was busily engaged in stamping the banks down with my sea-booted feet.

Humming a little song to myself, I was passing the stops, when the wail of a foghorn came to my ears. I listened intently, thinking at first that it was our own. As I paused in my work, with nerves astrain, a wall of misty whiteness came sweeping out of the murk on our starboard. While I yelled in excited fright, the luminous bulk took the shape of the headsails and double topsails of a large ship crossing our bows!

Things happened with frightful suddenness. While I hung to the rolled-up canvas of the flying jib with skin tingling and hair raised in alarm, the

other vessel stormed past and I thought she was going clear until I saw myself looking down over her deck and felt the tip of the boom strike the stranger's mizzen rigging. As soon as I felt the shock, I jumped and landed with a thump into the bottom of a quarter-boat outslung on davits, and while I was picking myself up there was a crash, a volley of shouts and curses, and then both vessels must have gone clear.

My legs seemed paralysed, and I fancied for a moment that I had broken my back when I struck the thwarts of the boat. But in a few seconds the numbness departed, and I became conscious of a hoarse voice shouting :

"Fetch a lantern here, some o'you ! That blasted Dutchman has stove th' whole quarter in—Th' damned bumpkin's gone. Braces adrift. Look alive !"

A lantern was brought, casting a halo of yellow in the mist, and a voice came booming :

"How's that boat ? Is she stove ? Thought I h'ard somthin' fallin' into it. Look an' see."

Now I was fully conscious of everything that was happening below me, but I made no attempt to rise out of the boat. I don't know why. Probably I had not recovered from the shock. Anyway, I lay across the thwart until a man's head appeared over the gunwhale and I was revealed in the light of the lantern he held.

"Sink me !" he shouted. "Here's man a lyin' in here——"

"Is he dead ?" boomed the commanding voice below.

"Are ye dead, shipmate ?" questioned the man in all seriousness, flashing the lamp over me.

"No," I managed to answer. "Just shook up a bit, that's all. I'll tumble out if you'll give me a hand."

And I crawled painfully over the gunwale and, stepping down on deck, found myself in the midst of a mob of men. One of them, a great, black-bearded fellow, grasped the lantern and held it up in front of my face.

"Waal, an' where did you spring from?" he asked sharply.

"Fell off the jibboom of that other vessel," I replied.

"Oh, ye did, did ye?"

The man's tone was vindictive and nasty.

"Where in the blazes were yer eyes? Couldn't ye hear us? What vessel was that anyway? One o' yer Cape Horners out t' trim the *Flyin' Cloud*, eh?"

"No, sir," I answered respectfully. "She was an English ship—the *Magician* bound from New York to Melbourne——"

"Huh! Damned lime-juicer! Might ha' known it. Starvation an' ease, an' watch on deck snoozin' in th' lee o' somethin' 'stead o' keepin' a good look out."

Grumbling to himself he laid the lantern on deck.

"An' who told ye t' come aboard here?" he continued. "What d'ye think we're goin' t' do with ye?"

"I'll turn to," I answered.

"Ye'll turn to, will ye?" he snapped. "An' what d'ye think we're runnin'—a blasted sailor's home for every calashee scrub that flops aboard? This is a whaler, not a packet ship. Have you ever gone whalin'?"

I replied in the negative. A whaler ! A dirty, oily "spouter," outward bound, most likely, on one of their two and three year voyages ! Whaleships ! A merchant sailor's horror. He watched me with his savage eyes glinting in the light of the lamp.

"Yes, sir," I replied, wondering at the man's peculiar aggressiveness.

"Waal, I cal'late ye'd better start in an' do it," he growled menacingly. "Over th' rail ye go now, or I'll help ye."

"What ?" I cried in horrified consternation. "Good Heavens, sir, you don't mean that !"

There was no mistaking his words when he advanced toward me with his shoulders hunched and arms outstretched. The men who had been working at the port braces knocked off to look on. As the great brute advanced, I whipped out my knife.

"Sheer off !" I snarled. "I don't know whether you're joking or not, but, by th' hook block, I'll give you a fight if you're looking for one."

He stopped short on seeing the knife in my hand.

"Trundle that out of his fist !" he cried to the assembled men. "Give him a toss. We don't want him aboard here."

A rough-looking fellow picked a capstan bar out of the rack and came towards me with the weapon upraised for a blow. I backed to the taffrail with my left arm over my head and the knife grasped tightly in my right fist ; with wits working and eyes roaming for a chance of escape from the murderous intent of the whaler's crew.

It was unheard of ; a ghastly nightmare, and momentarily I expected to awake and find it all a bad dream. I can remember the savage faces

illuminated in the foggy glare from the lantern, and in their countenances not a revelation of pity or horror was shown. The black-bearded man was staring at me with a sinister, wolfish look in his eyes, and the man advancing with the bar seemed to be imbued with a certain joy of combat, a lustful, brutal expression in his face and figure which made me make up my mind to rush in and drive my knife into his heart.

Then, of a sudden, the man paused and lowered his weapon.

“Why, sink me! I believe it’s Jack Dixon, what was second mate o’ th’ *Bahama Belle*——”

“Eh!” snapped the man of the beard.

On the mention of my old blockade runner’s name, I recognized the man who had identified me as Joe Smith, one of her crew who had escaped prison some time before I did and, clutching at a straw, I lowered my knife.

“Aye, right you are, Joe,” I said. “And I’m thinking this is a poor reception for an old shipmate.”

Joe turned and spoke to the other.

“He’s all right, Cap’en. He’s an old shipmate o’ mine—second mate o’ the *Bahama Belle* runnin’ th’ Yankee lines between New Providence an’ Charleston. Good fellow——”

The whaler captain made a gesture.

“Come here, you! Put up your dirk. We were only jokin’.”

Thinking it was a particularly callous and bloody-minded joke, I slipped the knife into the sheath and stepped gingerly forward.

“Kin ye navigate?”

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

The skipper turned to Joe.

"Kin he?"

"Oh, yes, sir," replied the man. "He's a navigator all right."

"I hold a British Board of Trade certificate of competency as master," I volunteered.

"Then, by Judas, you're th' man we want!" cried the whaling skipper, bringing his heavy hand down on my shoulder. "Lord Harry! But I thought ye were nawthin' more nor less than some poor devil of a foremast hand! An' ye kin navigate, eh? Take sextant sights by th' sun, eh?"

"Yes, sir, and by the moon and stars as well."

I hastened to add my accomplishments:

"Time sights, double altitudes and lunars for chronometer ratings—I've had practice with them all, and if you have instruments——"

"We have them," he interrupted. "Come down below, sir."

And he led the way into the cabin.

III—THE WHALER AND HER CREW

When I was precipitated upon the whaling vessel in the manner described, I calculated that we were to the south'ard of Nantucket Shoals. The whaler had fitted out in New Bedford and had stood to the south'ard for an offing after clearing Buzzard's Bay. Coming about, she was running to the east'ard when she crossed the *Magician's* bows and narrowly escaped being cut in half. So the black-bearded man told me as he lit the cabin lamp, and I knew then that I was on an outward bound "spouter."

"I'm th' master o' this vessel," he said, as he

motioned me to be seated on the cushioned transom. "My name's Silvera—Captain Rodriquez Silvera, an' this vessel's the whalin' barque *Arcturus*, bound on a southern sperm-whale cruise. I'm no navigator, 'cept by dead reckonin', an' my first officer, who was supposed to do th' navigatin', has gone an' died on me. Came aboard in Noo Bedford full as a tick, took to his bunk, an' croaked this mornin'. You'll come in nice an' handy to take his place, an' I reckon you won't kick, eh?"

"I won't kick, Captain."

"Not even for a long whalin' cruise?"

"No, sir," I replied, "but I'm no whaleman——"

"Ye don't need t' be," he answered. "All as we'll ask ye t' do 'ull be t' navigate th' vessel t' where we want her t' go. Ye don't have nawthin' t' do with th' whalin' part of it. Navigate an' that's all. I'll give ye fifty dollars a month, an' ye kin live aft here."

"Ye kin take that gaudy first mate's room an' his gear as soon as we git him cleared out—Wait a minute. I'll have him cleared out now so's ye kin take aholt an' start right in."

He arose and clambered up the companionway steps, and I could hear him calling to the watch on deck. When he came below again, four ragged-looking, unkempt ruffians followed him.

"Git that stiff outa his bunk an' heave him over th' rail——"

"Sew him up, sir?" inquired one of the men.

"Heave him over, I said," snapped Captain Silvera sharply. "I've got no canvas to waste on that beach-comber. Ye kin lash somethin' to his heels as a sinker—No, blast him, jest shove him over as he is. Go ahead, now!"

And while I remained seated, mute with surprise and shocked at such callous words, the men entered the mate's room and unceremoniously lugged the dead body of a man out of the berth and up on deck. I could hear their feet shuffling along the planks over head ; heard the barking, " One, Two ! Three ! An' heave ! " as they swung their burden, and then the sullen splash as the body struck the water. Captain Silvera's harsh voice roused me from the terror of my thoughts at this unfeeling piece of desecration.

" Your room's ready for ye, *Mister* Dixon, but afore ye turn in, I'd like ye t' fix up our course. I want t' shape for th' Western Islands. Here's th' chart, dividers, rulers, an' pencil."

I gave him the course in a few seconds, and he shouted it up the open companionway to the deck officer.

Thus, within twenty-four hours I was metamorphosed from Jack Dixon, A.B., on the merchant ship *Magician* to Mister Dixon, navigating officer on the whaling barque *Arcturus*. I had changed my flag from the " blood and guts " of old England to the stars and stripes of the United States.

I had twice been in danger of losing my life—I had no doubt whatever that Captain Silvera would have given me a swim had not Joe Smith recognized me and mentioned the fact that I was a navigator—and here I was, logged for a lengthy voyage, with exceedingly doubtful company, a brute of a Portuguese Yankee for skipper, and in a trade which I, as a merchant sailor, detested with the hereditary hatred of the bluewater shellback. However, I was in no position to choose. I had benefited by the change which luck had hove me

into, but a nameless dread gripped my heart whenever I thought of the incident of the early morning, and I shivered involuntarily as I stepped into the berth assigned to me.

Scratching a match, I found the bulkhead lamp and lit it, and by its feeble light I saw that the room was of the ordinary type, with bunk and drawers underneath, a washstand with a tumbler and water-bottle rack over it, a small table and a clothes locker. At the foot of the bunk was a bookshelf equipped with a brine-stained "Navigator," by Nathaniel Bowditch, a book of azimuth tables, "Nautical Almanac," directories and "Sailing Directions"; and a few shallow novels of the type affected by some officers completed the library. The bedclothes in the bunk were dirty and disarranged, and I had another shock when I saw that the pillow was stained with blood.

"Lord Harry!" I muttered apprehensively. "What kind of a packet have I blown aboard of?"

Silvera opened the door at this juncture. He must have noticed me staring at the bloody pillow.

"I'll get th' stoo'ard t' clear that dunnage away an' put fresh clothes in that bunk," he said as he entered. "You're wonderin' what that mess came from, eh?"

And as I nodded dumbly he laughed.

"That come from his head. He was drunk when he come aboard in Noo Bedford an' fell down th' cabin gangway an' stove his thick skull. I cal'late that's what finished him."

Then, with an assumption of heartiness, he slapped me on the back.

"You don't want t' mind our little joke this mornin', Dixon. We whalers are rough an' ready

but we don't mean no harm. Marchant ways ain't whaleship ways. Thar' ain't no brass an' gold lace aboard these craft, but you'll find things'll be all right ef ye do yer duty. Now I reckon ye'll find Lamson's rig-out 'ull about fit ye, so jest take 'em an' use 'em.

"Thar's a good kurnometer here—a noo one showin' Greenwich mean time an' rated one second slow daily. I've kep' it wound up while that joker was lyin' on his beam ends. I've got a sex'ant in my berth which I'll hand ye later. Git them lime-juicer's dungarees off ye an' come t' breakfast. It'll be ready in a few minutes."

Feeling a little more composed mentally, I changed my tarry rags for more respectable apparel, and sat down to breakfast with the queerest company of human beings it was ever my lot to be shipmates with. Two of the men were yellow-skinned Portuguese half-breeds from the Azores, named Fernandez and Francisco; the other two were Polynesians—one being, without doubt, the ugliest and most ferocious looking character I had ever seen. His cheeks were tattooed in bluish concentric rings while his huge white teeth were filed into saw-like points. When he smiled, the aspect of his countenance was frightful and repellent. All four were clad in coloured flannel shirts, and they ate like wolves, boiled beef and coffee disappearing down their capacious mouths like coal into a furnace.

Having spent a good deal of time in the Southern States, I could be excused for wondering why four "blacks" were allowed to eat in the cabin. The skipper must have sensed my mental astonishment.

“Let me make ye acquainted with th’ second an’ fourth mates.” Fernandez and Francisco nodded. “The other gents are Hilo Peter an’ Tahiti Jack—our harpooneers.”

The Polynesians grinned acknowledgment, Tahiti Jack looking a veritable ogre with his disfigured cheeks and serrated teeth.

I have seen some hard cases in my day, but that whaler’s crew impressed me as being the most cut-throat looking crowd I ever set eyes on. Not a man but what had a scar or disfigurement of some sort on his person; all had a lurching hard-bitten appearance, while the language they used was vile enough for an Atlantic packet ship’s fo’c’sle.

The vessel seemed to me to be rather an unusual craft for the whaling business, my recollection of sundry Nantucketers and Vineyard Haven “spouters” I had seen at sea being vastly different from the *Arcturus* in almost every way. The orthodox South-Seaman was a square-sterned, apple-bowed type of wind-jammer; clumsy looking, with wretchedly cut sails, bowsprit steeved up like a mast, a housed-in poop, and no sail above topgallants.

The *Arcturus* had clipper lines and all the appearance of a clipper; her yards were very square, her masts lofty and with a rake aft, and the length of mast above her main royal induced me to believe that she once crossed a skysail yard. She was a clipper to sail as well. Silvera afterwards told me that she had been built for the “live ebony” trade—otherwise slaving—but when she had been put out of that business he and a few others had bought her and fitted her out for whaling.

Something of her appearance was spoiled by the ungainly whaleboat davits—three to starboard and one to port. Two spare boats lay bottom-up on the gallows aft, and amidships were placed the brick tryworks, with a huge pile of kindling-wood stacked around them. On top of the for'ard house was a great tarpaulined box which, I deduced, was a water tank.

I counted thirty men in our crew. They seem to have been composed of every nationality under the sun—Americans, Portuguese, Scotch, English, Polynesians, Scandinavians, and negroes ; a rough-and-tough looking crowd, but all expert whalers, filling the positions of harpooners, boat steerers, coopers, blacksmiths, and seamen. So much for the *Arcturus* and her company.

IV—I DRINK WITH SILVERA

We picked up the north-east trades after sighting Gran Canaria, and in sunshine, under blue skies and over bluer water, we ambled lazily on our aimless course. At night we hove to in order to cover the whaling grounds in daylight.

Silvera remained as agreeable as ever, but the man seemed to be utterly heartless, though I cannot say he was severe in handling the crew ; in fact he permitted liberties which would not have been tolerated for an instant upon merchant ships. He was pleasant to talk to and a good conversationalist, but I cannot remember in any of his discourses with me a single sentence which revealed a trace of sympathetic utterance.

He was an atheist and a man who scorned emotion of any sort, and from the amount of

knowledge he seemed to possess regarding the Congo and Bonny Rivers, Benin and the Dahomey coast, I surmised that he had been a slaver captain or officer at some time in his life. Men who can calmly "jettison" their living cargo into a shark-infested sea when pursued by a cruiser, have case-hardened their hearts against any appeal to feeling and compassion.

Looking over the notes from which I am compiling this narrative, I find but a daily sequence of entries for the next two weeks :

"Fine weather. Wind N.E., fresh. Vessel under all plain sail running to s'thard. People employed on gear. No fish sighted. Lat by obs.—Long.—Log.—Bar.— So ends this day."

At night we brought to the wind.

According to my instructions from Silvera, we gave the Cape Verde Islands a wide berth and stood well over to the eastward of the thirtieth meridian.

"A good whalin' ground," explained the skipper. "Then we'll go to the Brazil bank."

But luck seemed to have deserted us on reaching our objective point, and though the mast look-outs were manned all day, not a single hail of "There she blows!" was sounded.

As we were right in the track of the homeward-bound ships from Australia and the Cape bound for the British Channel, as well as the outward ships from American ports, we saw many of them at a distance. With the desire for sighting and hailing passing vessels which is imbued in all deep-water sailormen, Silvera would always evince an interest in the Cape Horners flying past and endeavour to speak to them. As homeward-bound deepwater clippers are in a hurry to get to port,

none of them thought of backing the maintopsail to "gam" with a dirty "spouter."

"Too good a breeze hereabouts for those fellows, Captain," I remarked one day, after a big clipper with stuns'ls out had ignored our signal. "We'll have to get down in the Variables for speaking ships. Up in the Trades they're all for cracking on."

"Aye, I reckon so," he answered. "I want t' git some stuff for th' medicine chest an' a little lime-juice. Don't want no scurvy t' break out now th' fresh meat an' vegetables are done."

Thus passed the lazy days. Tacking to windward for a day; lying to at nights, and running down the wind at times, we literally became an ocean loafer. Whales were conspicuous by their absence and I would have welcomed the sight of one as eagerly as the oldest whaleman aboard. I was becoming heartily tired of this *dolce far niente*, with nothing to do but squint at the sun and wind up a chronometer. There were no books aboard, save what I found in my own room, and to while away the time I read the trashy novels from cover to cover and even perused the dry Sailing Directories and the "Nautical Almanac."

I had thought of taking Silvera in hand and teaching him the use of sextant and chronometer, but on second thought I decided that the less he knew about navigation the better for me. That he knew nothing about the science was correct, as I was not long in finding out. Though it struck me as being rather an unusual thing for the master of a deep-sea vessel to be ignorant of navigation, yet it was by no means uncommon in certain trades. In the Pacific, I had known island trading

vessels in command of masters who were not qualified as navigators, while many sealers have two captains—one as sailing master and the other a practical sealer and ice expert.

The skipper's penchant for chasing vessels was encouraged by me, as I hoped to beg some reading matter from the first craft that would wait for a boat from us. So, when I came on deck one morning and found us storming after a big full-rigged ship whose upper canvas was just lifting above the horizon to the east'ard, I was as eager as any one aboard to overhaul her. With royals mast-headed we brought the big ship broad on the bow before noon, and though she had lower and top-mast stuns'ls out, we were overhauling her hand over fist.

"Have a squint at her," said Silvera handing me the glass. "What d'ye think she is?"

"English ship," I answered, as soon as I looked at her. "Australiaman or a tea packet from China. She's a big lump of a vessel, but I think we could sail rings 'round her——"

"Waal, we'll have a closer look at her an' see ef we kin induce her stubborn lime-juice skipper to back his maintops'il for a spell. We'll go below an' have dinner now."

I had never known Silvera to be so pleasant before. He joked with the officers and Kanakas, and laughed heartily over my remark that "the homeward-bounders would think that the Flying Dutchman had shifted his cruising ground by the way we were chasing them all."

It was a pointless joke, but it evidently tickled his fancy immensely.

"Ha ! Ha ! Ha ! Flyin' Dutchman !" he guffawed.

“Great—simply great, Dixon. We’ll crack a bottle over that, by Godfrey! Stoo’ard! Fetch a bottle of rum here.”

The liquor was brought. I filled my glass and drank to his good health. He had scarce put his lips to the tumbler before Francisco sung out down the companionway:

“Better come on deck, Cap’en. Hagen is took bad with his stomach again——”

Silvera rose from his seat angrily.

“Cuss Hagen,” he growled. “Why don’t he die or git well——”

As he stepped up the companion he turned and spoke to me.

“You’ll excuse me a minute, Dixon. Hagen is delirious again, I cal’late. Punish th’ bottle. I’ll be back in a minute.”

The rum was particularly good, and I must have punished the bottle, although I have no recollection of drinking more than two three-finger nips. I remember the others getting up from the table and going on deck; then a feeling of intense drowsiness took possession of me and I staggered over to the transom and went to sleep.

V—I OVERHEAR SOME TALK

“Hey, thar! Rouse an’ shine!”

I was shaken violently, and opened my eyes to find Captain Silvera leaning over me with his hand on my shoulder. There was a smile on his face.

“Waal, sink me!” he rumbled. “Ef you ain’t th’ primest hand for knockin’ out a long caulk, I don’t know who is. Lord Harry, man, ye’ve been on yer beam ends for ’most two watches——”

“Funny thing,” I muttered drowsily.

“What’s funny?”

“My sleepin’ like this. I’m no Seven Sleeper. Must have ben that rum——”

“You jest bet it was,” replied Silvera with a laugh. “Cripes, man, ye sat down an’ finished the whole bottle.”

“The whole bottle? Why, I only remember taking two nips——”

“Infernal big nips, Dixon. Reg’lar second mate’s four-finger whacks, they must ha’ bin. Come, turn out an’ have some supper.”

With all the feelings of a man recovering from a drinking bout, I rolled off the transom and soused my aching head in a basin of cold water. Then I staggered over to the table and sat down to the supper the steward had laid out for me. The skipper was in his room, but came out and helped himself to a slice of cold beef and a biscuit.

“Did you get anything from that lime-juicer we were chasing?” I inquired sleepily.

“Beggar refused t’ heave to,” replied Silvera. “Her skipper told me t’ go t’ thunder. Wasn’t supplyin’ Yankee spouters with medicines an’ stores every time they hailed for them. Mean sorter swab he was, but I had th’ laugh on him jest th’ same.”

“How’s that?”

“Swiped two of his men away from him.”

“What?” I ejaculated in surprise. “Swiped two of his men? How?”

“They jumped overboard when we ranged to wind’ard of him, an’ before old bully th’ Britisher c’d git a boat off th’ chocks, I lowered an’ scoffed them in front o’ his eyes. He howled an’ jumped round like a sperm bull in a flurry.”

"Whatever made two members of a homeward-bounder's crew jump for a Yankee whaler?" I questioned doubtfully.

"They were in trouble with the after guard. Some fracas, I reckon, which they stood a chanst o' being jailed for in England. It's a great joke on Mr. Johnny Bull. Now, sir, when you've finished, I'd like ye t' shape a course for t' keep in th' track o' them Cape Horners. I must git medicines an' lime-juice. Hagen is pretty sick an' some o' th' crowd for'ard are showin' signs o' scurvy."

I pushed my cup away from me and looked at him in some surprise.

"Why," I replied wonderingly, "we're right in the sailing track now. All the homeward-bound craft from the south'ard plan to cross the Line in twenty-three West or thereabouts. But what d'ye want to speak north-bound vessels for? Why don't you hail the outward-bounders?"

"Why don't ye make for the Cape Verde Islands? You can get all the fresh vegetables, oranges, limes, and fresh truck you want there, and it's only a couple of days' sail to the east'ard."

And I glanced at him with a vague distrust in my mind.

Silvera laughed.

"My dear Dixon, it's easy seen that you've never been skipper of a whalin' craft. As a marchant sailor it'll seem queer to you, but it's or'nary enough to us spouter men. We never git nawthin' from the outward-bounders. They have th' best part of their v'y'ge afore them an' consequently they keep a tight fist on their anti-scorbutics 'cause they never know how long they're

a-goin' t' be box-haulin' about in the Variables north an' south o' th' Line. Th' homeward craft have a port 'most over their bows when they get north o' twelve latitude an' ef they've got potatoes, lime-juice, an' sich truck aboard, they'll give it freely 'cause they're 'most home. Y'see ? ”

“ But why don't you make the Islands and do away with this chasing for to beg stores ? ”

“ Now, thar's another thing 'bout whalers ye don't know, Dixon. I dursen't make a landfall in' a place like Cape Verde, or some o' my bullies 'ull skip out. Some o' them are sick o' th' v'y'ge already, an' ef they thought St. Vincent was anywheres near, them Portygees aboard here 'ud swim ashore even ef we lay ten mile off. Now d'ye understand ? ”

I nodded, and with his plausible explanations my doubts fled.

“ Well, Captain, just keep her about as we are and you'll raise all the Cape Horn fleet, besides the River Platers and the Indiamen.”

Next morning I noticed the two strangers loafing around the fo'e'sle door with others of our crew. It was evident that they had fallen among friends by the manner in which the others hung around listening to every word they were saying. However, I did not pay much attention to them, though I could hardly credit any sailor leaping overboard from a homeward-bound Britisher and taking a chance of being picked up in a shark-infested sea by an American whaling barque. The fellows looked tough enough to have done anything up to murder, and there was a possibility that they had done as Captain Silvera had said.

During the day we raised the royals of a large American ship and we bore away until we had him close aboard. Silvera looked at the vessel through his binoculars for a long time and afterward I saw him conversing with one of the new additions to our crew. When he came aft he ordered the helmsman to come up and we braced the yards and swung away without speaking, merely dipping the ensign.

"What's the matter with him?" I inquired, pointing to the other ship.

"No good," answered the skipper. "That's th' *Lillian Cullen*. Master's an old shipmate o' mine an' I wouldn't ask him for a rope-yarn. He's a swab."

And he walked away.

"Humph," I said to myself. "You're infernally particular. Whalers' ways ain't merchant ways, that's a certainty. First vessel I was ever on that could afford to loaf around and pick and choose the craft she'll speak for a bit of stores."

Early next morning, another English ship was sighted and given chase to, and again our skipper declined to speak her after he had overhauled the vessel. When I asked him his reasons he lost his temper and told me to mind my own business. I did so, and retired to my bunk to think out a true bill for all these particular happenings.

As it was very hot below decks, I opened the small square port in the cabin trunk to let some air into my room, and while I lay ruminating and reflecting over the events of the previous weeks I overheard the skipper talking with one of the deserters from the English ship. The conversation was disjointed, but I listened in astonishment to the words.

"Ye say John was shippin' in Melb'u'n . . . th' next ship what had anythin'?"

The stranger answered:

"Aye . . . fortnight or so . . . pot o' stuff coming down country . . . big Bendigo strike . . . Ballarat . . ."

"Any difficulty . . . signin' on?"

"None . . . eighty vessels when I left . . . crews cut on run for diggin's. Skipper's payin' eight pounds a month for A.B.'s . . . easy."

"What . . . ship's name?"

"Yankee built clipper . . . three skys'l yarder . . . Britisher . . . named *Sea* . . . big ship . . . loaded . . ."

Then I heard my name mentioned by the stranger.

"Aye . . . curious beggar . . . Dixon . . . navigator . . . fell off jibboom, ye say?"

Silvera's growling voice replied and I strained my ears.

"Yes . . . hard job . . . hoccussed him . . . bottle . . . rum . . . knows nawthin'."

And they moved away.

"Hoccussed? Bottle of rum?" I muttered. "Humph! That's why I slept so hard. There's something might fishy aboard this packet." And I set my wits to work.

Why should I have been drugged? What happened to make Silvera remove me from the scene for a space? How comes he to be so familiar with a runaway sailor from an English ship? What had he to do with "John" who was "shipping in Melbourne?" What had the Yankee-built clipper *Sea-Something-or-Other* to do with a whaling barque or Silvera himself? Why should I be the

subject of discussion between my skipper and a runaway stranger ?

I asked myself these questions a hundred times and failed to find a possible solution. All morning I remained in my berth turning the problems over in my mind until my brain boiled, and when I went on deck to take a noon sight, I made a resolution to keep my weather eye lifting for squalls.

VI—THE “ARCTURUS” HAULS BY THE WIND

For several days the skipper never spoke to me. Then all at once he became affable and friendly, even making me a present of some of his favourite cigars. I felt he had something up his sleeve and I kept on my guard for new developments. We had been yarning away for a while when he inquired suddenly—

“Are you religious ? ”

“Religious ? ” I reiterated. “Well, that’s a hard question to answer. “I’ve got as much religion as most sailormen have a chance to get, but I’m no devil-dodger by any manner of means. I’ve lived pretty square though, and done my best for a shipmate——”

“Humph ! ”

He interrupted with a grunt and continued pacing the quarter.

“Did you ever kill a man ? ” was his next query.

“No,” I replied decisively, “and I hope I never will.”

“Ever been in th’ live ebony trade ? Ever been privateerin’ ? ”

“No, sir,” I answered. “But I’ve been blockade running.”

He seemed to think very little of that and resumed his pacing.

"Looky here," he continued, pausing in his three steps and a turn. "Ef you got a chanst to make a pile of dollars easily would you be particular as to how ye got it? Especially ef nobody 'ud ever know or find out? A pile of dollars, mind—a fortune enough to 'low ye to retire an' live at ease for th' rest of yer days. Eh?"

"That altogether depends, Captain. I'm open to grab all I can get, but I'd like to know how it's to be done first."

"Say piracy—lootin' vessels," returned he, staring into my face with a steady gaze.

"Piracy?" I gasped. "Lord, man, but that's a terrible thing, and means the gallows if caught. Besides, it means murder——"

A fearful thought flashed into my mind, and he must have noticed the terror in my eyes.

"Pah, man!" he said with a half laugh. "You must think I'm a second Cap'en Kidd. I don't mean this throat-cuttin' business: black flag, walkin' planks an' that sorter guff. I hev a little bit o' a scheme for borryin' stores from them passin' vessels an' sellin' them down south in th' Falklands. Ye see, while we're cruisin' on these grounds we kin be askin' passin' vessels for barrels o' flour, pork, beef, an' sich-like——"

He paused with a sheepish smile on his face, while I almost burst out laughing. What a mean, cadging schemer he was! And this was his piracy? Holy sailor! I had met stingy skippers in my day, but this whaleman had them all hull down. So this was his little game! This explained his

chasing of ships ! Begging for stores to sell on his own account !

“ You can count me in, Captain,” I answered heartily. “ I don’t mind if that’s the game——”

“ Sure ! That’s what I was a drivin’ at, but I didn’t know how ye’d look at the idea. ”

“ *Caramba !* I don’t care a hang. My conscience don’t bother me on that score. We’ll hail every ship in sight, and take all we can get.”

He laughed pleasantly and walked away for’ard.

“ What a game ! ” I ruminated, but as I turned his conversation over in mind I began to think I was more of a fool than he was. What pile of dollars was to be made out of a few barrels of stores ? Why should he ask me if I’d ever killed a man ? I was beginning to get horribly tangled up in my thoughts, and as I was not particularly quick-witted, I judged I had better go below and in the privacy of my berth overhaul my experiences from the hour I was thrown aboard the *Arcturus*.

I went over events from the time I was threatened with a long swim, and then came the memory of the bottle of rum ; chasing the English ship and the two supposed strangers who came aboard mysteriously while I laid in a drugged slumber ; the disjointed conversation I had overheard and now this farcical conversation with its preposterous and picayune suggestion. Silvera to make a “ fortune ” by such a petty scheme ! Pah ! It was unheard of !

While I scratched my thick downcast head in perplexity, a hail from aloft came to my ears.

“ Vessel down to loo’ard, sir ! ”

I rolled out and pulled on my boots.

"Must go and see Silvera cadging his stores," I muttered.

When I went on deck it was to see him and one of the deserters aloft in the hoops on the fore and main scanning the upper sails of a ship which gleamed like tiny pearls above the blue of the sea line. When he came down, he gave me a knowing wink and passed the usual order to bear down.

"We'll borry somethin' from this packet, I hope," he said softly. "Big ship—three skys'y-l-yarder."

I remained on deck for over an hour, until the other vessel hove her hull up above the horizon. She was a big ship, deep-laden, and carrying double topsails, single topgallants, royals, and skysails on each mast. There was a fresh breeze blowing and with all our own kites set and drawing, our little clipper barque sped rapidly through the water in the direction of the stranger.

It was about four in the afternoon when I went below to get a drink from the rack in the saloon. The skipper met me as I stepped down the ladder.

"Where are ye goin'?" he inquired.

"Just to get a drink of water," I replied.

"Oh," he muttered, and he stepped on deck as I went over to the table.

The steward was coming out of my room just as I lifted the water bottle from the rack and found it empty. He looked across at me quickly.

"Water, sir? You'll find some fresh from the tank in your room, sir. I'll fill that one in a minute."

He reached over for the bottle and I handed it to him.

Entering my room I closed the door.

"Now," I said to myself, "here's where I get my bearings. Steward is a liar, for he filled my water bottle this morning before I turned out."

I reached for the article and was just in time to see the last grains of a whitish powder effervescing into nothingness in the bottom.

"Just what I expected," thought I. "The rum bottle won't work twice, but the water-bottle will. Humph!"

With a plan of action mapped out I poured the water out into a tumbler and thence into the wash bucket. Then I threw myself down on my bunk and awaited developments.

I must have been lying some twenty minutes when I heard stealthy footsteps approach my door and some one tapped lightly.

"Mr. Dixon!"

It was the steward's voice. I shut my eyes and snored.

"Mr. Dixon!" came the voice again, and the door was quietly opened and the man entered the room. I had my back turned to him, but I could almost sense everything he did, even to picking up the tumbler and examining it. After bending over me he left the room and closed the door.

"So much for him," I murmured when he had departed. Glancing out of the square port above my bunk I could see the big skysail-yarder coming up to leeward. Fearing lest I should be seen staring through the small window I half drew the curtain and lay down again.

Once more heavy footsteps approached my door and a voice boomed:

"Dixon! Dixon!"

It was Silvera, but I made no answer. Then he

looked in on me and I heard him say to the steward who was in the cabin :

"He's out of th' way for a long spell ef he drank a tumbler o' that water. Look in on him now an' again."

And the door was closed quietly.

There was a great deal of tramping overhead. I felt that all hands were out and preparing for something by the scurrying of booted feet which resounded on the deck above me. Silvera was at the poop rail, singing out orders.

"To yer weather braces ! Square the yards . . . Git your engine set up, Cameron. . . . Whalin' gear out o' boats. . . . Stand by."

I glanced through my port, but could see nothing but a portion of the quarter rail and the empty sunlit sea.

"Now, Fernandez !" came the skipper's strident voice. "Got that Brazilian ens'n bent. Ease down yer helm . . . Slack away weather, haul taut lee braces . . . Haul up on yer mains'l . . . Smartly, men !"

"Hauling by the wind," I murmured.

As the barque heeled over with the pressure, I took another look through my port and saw the strange ship close aboard. She was a big two thousand-tonner at least, with built lowermasts and long spars.

"American built ship loaded with Australian wool for England," was my mental comment. What a magnificent picture she made with her snowy cotton duck canvas full and drawing, and her long black hull slipping through the blue water with a line of foam streaming aft from her beautiful clipper bow !

I could make out the officer walking the weather side of her long quarter; see the passengers she carried standing upon the coach-house staring at us; see, too, the crew's heads peering over the rail for'ard and a man in a red shirt sitting astride of the martingale stays under the bowsprit—evidently spearing a dolphin, for he had a four-pronged grain in his hand. My attention was suddenly arrested by the actions of this fellow when he commenced waving his neckerchief in a peculiar manner. A voice sounded close above me.

"There's John, Cap'en. D'ye see him hangin' to th' martingale an' wavin'——"

Startled, I glanced at the clipper's name board on the quarter rail and read, *Sea King*.

"*Sea King* . . . Three skys'l-yarder . . . Melbourne . . . John?" I muttered, and I felt that something was going to happen which would materially clear the foggiess of my mind and elucidate the mystery of the whaling barque *Arcturus* and her peculiar skipper.

VII—I QUOTE FROM MY LOG

"What ship is that?" came a faint hail from the clipper ship.

"Brazilian trainin' frigate *Arcturus*!" thundered Silvera.

"Brazilian frigate be blowed!" came from the other, and the voice continued:

"Sheer off now! D'ye want to run us down!"

The *Sea King's* lower sails were ashiver, owing to our stopping up the wind. As we were jammed up to windward, we could not bear away without coming down on the other ship, and I could hear

the officers on the Australiaman cursing at us as they put their helm up to get clear of us.

"You confounded Yankee spouter!" bawled a little red-faced man shaking his fist at us. "What in blazes d'ye mean?"

I could hear Silvera laughing.

"Slap it into him, Cameron!" he cried. "Wheel-house, mind!"

Bang! There came a detonation which caused the *Arcturus* to shake in every plank, and as I stared in consternation through the port, I saw the *Sea King's* wheelhouse literally swept from the deck in a crumple of splinters—wheel-gear, helmsman and the wooden house knocked clean over the lee quarter. Fascinated by the suddenness and horror of the action, I kept my gaze fixed on the now unmanageable clipper; heard the shouts of fear and rage which came from her people, and saw the panic-stricken crew running about on her decks. An officer ran to her break rail shouting:

"Haul aft your weather head sheets! Slack away lee braces——"

"Sweep th' quarter, Cameron!" roared Silvera excitedly. "Don't give 'em a chance to wear ship or they'll run away from us——"

Bang! Another explosion, and a wild yell from our crew as the shot smashed across the cabin trunk, tearing skylights, companionway, and chart-house into a shower of splinters and clearing the poop of all living creatures.

"Give 'em another, Cameron. Bring that main-m'st down ef you can. Look out for John."

John—the man in the red shirt—was still astride the martingale and safe enough if he stayed where he was.

Before the third shot was fired, I heard footsteps approaching my room, and I had just time to fall back on my blankets and commence snoring again when some one looked in on me. The gun spoke again, but I controlled my nerves so that I made no movement.

"Dead to the world," muttered the intruder, and the door was closed quietly. When I stared through the port once more, it was to see the clipper ship lazily drifting to leeward with yards aback and sails slatting. The third shot had torn a great gap in the bulwarks amidships, but the mainmast was still standing.

"Lower away yer boats!" commanded Silvera sharply. "Fernandez! Take charge and work down to loo'ard an' pick us up when we're ready."

I shall quote from my log as to what happened next, as I consider it requires no elaboration:

"Four boats lowered. Six men in each. All armed with cutlasses and firearms. Captain Silvera in leading boat. Two boats ranged to starboard and two to port of *Sea King*. Crew made fast to main chains and scrambled aboard, leaving one man in boat.

"Whalemen went aft in company with man in red shirt. A show of resistance was made by *Sea King's* officers. Some shots fired and ship's people driven forward and locked in fo'c'sle.

"Numerous boxes were fetched out of cabin and lowered carefully into boats. All boats returned within half an hour to our vessel. Man in red shirt coming off with Silvera.

"Time, 6 p.m., January 21, 1867. Latitude, 14° 10' North. Longitude 31° 6' West. 780 miles east of Cape Verde."

It was piracy—nothing more and nothing less. Horrified by the events I had witnessed, I laid back on my pillow, while the crew hoisted their boats and booty aboard. A number of men came down into the cabin and I was conscious that Silvera was among them. Snatches of their conversation fell upon my ears. Our villainous Portuguese Yankee skipper was giving orders.

“Yes! stow th’ stuff in th’ lazareet. . . . No! he’s sure for another six hours yet. . . . Won’t know anything. Easy now. Heavy, eh? . . . A great haul . . .”

“Holy sailor, Cap, but I was afraid ye’d never show up,” an unfamiliar voice was saying. “I’ve hardly slept a wink sence we crossed th’ Line. You picked up Billy all right. . . . Good haul. Waal, I cal’late that’ll finish us now, an’ I’m cussed glad. What’s yer plans for that joker t’windward? Soon be dark . . . Better hurry.”

The shuffling feet left the cabin and there was a scurrying about on deck. The *Sea King* was lying on our starboard side and I was unable to see her from my window.

“All right, Cameron,” sang out the skipper. “Plant one amidships. Look sharp or it’ll be dark.”

The boom of the gun came to my ears, and I realized what the fiends were doing. They were sinking their victim!

I saw through everything now. As I lay with the clammy sweat breaking out on my face, the mysterious actions of the past two months unfolded themselves before my mental vision, and the scales fell from my eyes. Nineteenth-century pirates masquerading in the guise of whalers! It

seemed impossible and improbable, but what else would account for the events and things I had seen and heard? The patrolling of the sailing tracks; the chasing of many ships upon trivial pretences; the nature of our crew, and the skipper's peculiar conversations. Two vessels had been looted—I had no doubt whatever that the ship we chased when I was drugged had been despatched in a manner similar to the *Sea King*—and upon both ships were confederates who in some mysterious manner had means of communicating with Silvera.

How was it all arranged? Both ships were Australiamen homeward bound. The conversation of Silvera and the stranger came to mind:

“Bendigo,” “Ballarat,” “pot o’ stuff comin’ down country,” he had said.

What stuff? It was as plain as a deadeye to me now. Bendigo and Ballarat, the new Victoria goldfields where everybody was flocking to. The “stuff,” gold!

Bang! The gun spoke again, and changed the tenor of my thoughts. What would happen to me? It was a disturbing question, and I realized my helplessness. Could Silvera do without my services? I couldn’t answer. It was a deuce of a position for a man to be in, but after a vast amount of brain-racking, I concluded that the less I pretended to know about what had happened the better for me. If Silvera thought that I suspected his game, I had absolutely no doubt but I would be given a toss to the sharks. Men of Silvera’s type had no compunctions. I knew that already.

My action after this may seem strange, but you must remember the state of mind I was in. I

had been an eyewitness of an act of piracy on the high seas. I was among a crowd of suspicious cut-throats who wished me to know nothing; a ship and her human freight was being sunk alongside, and I was supposed to be oblivious to it all in a drugged slumber. To calm my nerves and add realism to my feigned sleep, I poured out a small drink from the water bottle and tossed it off. Within a minute I could feel the drug working its soporific influence. I had a faint recollection of hearing the boom of the gun again, and then I lost consciousness.

VIII—I CARRY OUT A PLAN

I awoke naturally and saw that it was daylight. The steward was setting the breakfast on the cabin table, and feeling as if I had passed a nightmarish sleep, I turned out, washed, and went on deck. The steward looked sharply at me as I passed, but his "Good morning, sir!" was as civil as usual.

The skipper was pacing the trunk deck when I came up the companion, and he hailed me with a laugh.

"By th' great horse-block!" he cried. "Have ye really woke up? *Caramba!* I thought ye were in a trance by th' way ye snored. Th' second mate said he c'd hear ye upon deck here. Cripes, man, but you're a heavy sleeper."

I gave a sickly grin, and he stepped towards me.

"Run up agin' another hard case yesterday," he said softly. "That skys'l-yarder was another screw. Said he wanted me t' pay for all th' stuff I got, so I swung off. My scheme's no good, Dixon, so we'll get down to huntin' whale again.

When ye've fixed up th' reck'nin' I'll ask ye t' drive her south. Thar ain't no fish hereabouts, so we'll make th' Pacific an' try th' Line grounds thar. South we go, an' ho, for th' stormy Horn ! ”

I placed our position and gave the course for the Line. The barque had been lying to the wind all night with fore and main royals and topgallant-sails furled, and when I gave Silvera the course he swung out to the watch loafing for'ard :

“ Swing th' mainyard ! Make sail ! ”

To the second mate pacing to leeward he said :

“ Get the muslin on her, Mr. Fernandez. We've a long stretch to make an' we don't want to be all year makin' it. Rouse out yer stu'n's'l gear. Get th' booms out an' set lower an' topm'st stu'n's'ls to port. Clew up th' maintack an' sheet everything well down. This little barquey is goin' t' sail now ! ”

Among the men hurrying around to execute the orders I noticed the fellow in the red shirt ; and helping to break out the booms and stu'n's'l yards lashed on top of the for'ard house was Hågen, the sick man, looking as fit as he ever was. Yet Silvera had said he was delirious and dying !

During the weeks which passed on our run to the south'ard, the skipper treated me with every courtesy, and I guarded my emotions so well that he never suspected for a moment that I was aware of the crimes which he and his crew had committed. Indeed, things were so monotonous and usual, that I began to doubt myself ; the whole affair seemed but a vivid dream.

Though I hunted around for proofs to substantiate my suspicions, yet absolutely nothing could I find. No trace was there of any gun aboard, nor

did I ever run across any weapons other than a shotgun in Silvera's room. I knew that the officers had revolvers—most officers have—but rifles, cutlasses, cannon, and shells, there were none.

As I was not an officer of the ship I had no right to go prying around the vessel, but on the occasional strolls I made to the fo'c'sle head I found nothing to characterize the *Arcturus*, as being anything but what she was—a whaling barque bound on her lawful occasions with a perfect right to cruise wherever she listed in pursuit of the cetaceans. I might have got substantial proof if I could examine the lazaret, yet I knew that any attempt on my part would mean sudden death. I did not try.

We passed the East Falklands after a fine run down, and we crossed Burdwood's Bank to edge up to the stormy corner of the southern world. The weather was fine for the high latitude—fresh sou'westerly wind and a smooth sea—and with royals furled we swashed on our lonely way. I had been asleep all afternoon on the third day after passing the Falklands, and in my stocking feet I ascended the companion for a breath of fresh air. The night was black dark. Filling my pipe in the gangway, I stepped on deck intending to ask the watch officer for a match. As I passed along the lee alley towards the break rail, I heard my name mentioned by someone over to windward, and stopped to listen.

With the sough of the wind and the wash from our passage through the water, the conversationalists were obliged to speak loudly, and being to leeward I caught the words distinctly.

“Get him out o' th' way after we make the

Island. . . . We don't want him after that. . . . Need good navigator to pick it up. . . . Afterwards I can take her to 'Frisco. . . . Think Dixon knows anything? "

It was Slocum's voice—he of the red shirt—and he was talking to Silvera.

"Nawthin' . . . Doped out both times . . . *Albemarle* . . . *Sea King*. Get him to fetch us to Hiva Nuku . . . Jake Thompson'll have his schooner there an' we'll ship th' stuff. . . . Give him a toss to th' sharks . . ."

Fearful of being discovered, I crept away with the hair of my head tingling. So that was the lay! I was to be used for my navigating abilities in picking up some Pacific Island rendezvous and then cast adrift like a worn-out swab. Red Shirt would navigate the barque to San Francisco—anyone who could steer and keep track of a log could do that; but, picking up some isolated Pacific atoll required more accurate knowledge.

Slipping quietly into my room, I lit my pipe and turned into my bunk to think things out. A number of schemes came to my mind, but I dismissed them all as improbable and impossible. I had no friends among the crew whom I could rely upon. All were deep in the scheme and none would act against Silvera. Joe Smith, my former shipmate of the blockade days, had never spoken a word to me since the eventful night I fell aboard the barque, and I knew I could expect nothing from him.

Escape was impossible. If I attempted to swim to a passing ship I would be shot or quickly recaptured, and the chances of swimming in the icy seas of the Southern Ocean were small indeed. I

couldn't launch a boat without someone seeing or hearing me. I had to dismiss that. I had no weapons other than a sheath-knife, and even if I had a revolver, what could I do with it? Shoot Silvera and a few others, maybe, but it would not be long before I would be killed myself. No, I had to admit that my chances were mighty slim.

I reached down a chart of Cape Horn and the Straits of Magellan and studied it for a moment, and I remembered how, that very morning I had to explain to Silvera the great easterly variation which prevailed in the vicinity. He had questioned me with regard to the amount of westing in the course I had given him; in his ignorance he had reckoned when steering south, the course should necessarily be south, variation, deviation, and other errors of the compass being a mystery to him.

It was the easterly variation which gave me the idea. Desperate and all as it was, I decided that it was the only thing I could do. If I were destined to die, then I would take good care that others went with me. Briefly, I determined that I would put the *Arcturus* ashore on one or other of the dangerous racks which fringed the Horn!

I lay awake the best part of the night, smoking and thinking. At daylight I slipped into my pocket a steel watch chain I had found in the desk and went on deck. Francisco, the watch officer, was lolling over the break rail for'ard, and a stupid *Chileno* was at the wheel. Going over to the compass I told him to steer by the weather leech of the mainto'gallan's'l for a minute. Standing in front of him, I took off the binnacle hood, noted the point at the lubber mark on the compass, and after

slipping the steel chain under the right side of the card I placed the cover on again.

"All right," I growled to the helmsman. "Keep her as she was."

And I left him pulling the spokes over to the head up on the vast amount of westing I had introduced into the compass.

"Now!" I muttered. "I'll play a little game of my own, Captain Silvera, and we'll see who wins out—you or me. If I can't pile you up inside of twenty-four hours then I'm a Dutchman."

At noon I got a sight, and fixed our position as some eighty miles north-west of Staten Island. There was a fresh breeze blowing and we were logging seven to eight knots with a southerly wind. We were sailing close-hauled, heading about W.S. W. by correct compass course, but in reality the barque was actually making that course, as my steel chain more than compensated for the easterly variation.

"Now, sir," I said to the skipper, after I had shown him our position on the chart, "we'll be opening out the Horn by daylight and we're feeling the set of the South Drift now. Crack on and make the most of this breeze. We've plenty of sea room to clear Cape St. John and we want to make all the westing we can while the wind holds."

He nodded curtly. When he went on deck, I heard him singing out for the fore and main royals, topmast staysails and gaff-topsail to be set.

"Now," said I to myself, "slam away, you murdering pirate! Four bells in the first watch'll have us trying to push Staten Island out of the water and a grand lee shore the cliffs will make with this souther blowing. There are no lights

in this part of the world and there's sure to be fog inshore, and it's a safe bet that no lookout will ever report land until the breakers are heard."

The afternoon seemed interminably long, and as it was summertime down south, the night came tardily over the waste of rolling grey sea and greyer sky. I paced the quarter, smoking, until nine o'clock. Looking over the log slate in the chart-house, I made a mental calculation of our position as being about fifteen miles off the land. The breeze still held strong and the vessel was storming steadily on the course I had laid for her. Within two hours she would strike.

I glanced around the ship, heard the growling talk of the watch mustered aft in the lee of the half deck, smoking and yarning; heard a ribald chorus come from the fo'c'sle, and saw Fernandez steadily pacing the weather alley. Silvera was below asleep. The harpooners were playing cards in the half deck. A shivering negro tugged with mittened hands at the spokes of the wheel.

All were oblivious to impending disaster. But they deserved the fate I had in store for them, and when I felt my nerve wavering, I thought of the murdered crews of the *Albemarle* and *Sea King*. Aye! I could save my sympathy.

I went below and locked myself in my room. Sitting on the transom I made a mental overhaul of my life, and, finding the slate fairly clean, waited calmly for the crash which meant the end.

IX—SILVERA AND I ARE QUITS

The reader of this narrative will probably think I was extremely phlegmatic in my desperate

actions. I was. Life held very little for me then. I had no home and no relations, no friends except an odd shipmate here and there. I held a master's certificate, but hard times and hard experiences had practically killed all my ambition, and I hated the life I was living; hated the sea; hated everything. Existence for me had by now developed into a mere prolongation of life by eating and drinking. Scheming and planning had jaded my brain, and I was quite prepared to die if I could be sure of blotting out the horde of scoundrels I was shipmates with. God would give me credit for that, I was sure.

Therefore it was with an easy conscience that I waited for the inevitable, and without any nervousness I turned into my bunk. When the barque struck, I would remain where I was. Just as easy to die below decks as to be engulfed and tossed about in the open.

I must have fallen into an apathetic doze, for when I awoke it was to hear Fernandez scream inarticulate words down the companionway. The quietness of the night was broken by a sonorous booming. When a medley of shouts and running feet sounded overhead, I knew we were in the breakers. I felt the barque staggering and lurching, heard the steward open his door and clatter up the ladder, and Silvera roaring and swearing.

Someone shrieked, "Hard down! Hard down!" and then came a frightful shock.

I was hurled bodily to the floor. I made no attempt to rise, but lay where I fell, listening to the thunder of the waves breaking over the vessel and the hoarse shouts of the panic-stricken crew. The barque was lifting and pounding with dreadful

concussion upon the rock or ledge, and amidst the din of falling spars, rending woodwork, and crashing seas, the voice of Silvera could be heard directing the launching of a boat with frightful oaths.

All hands seemed to have swarmed aft on to the poop. I could hear the stamping and shuffling of their booted feet on the deck above me ; their yells and curses, and the boom and crash of the boarding breakers. Then I remember Slocum bawling something about " dead wall of rock ahead " and " drop off jibboom." There was more stamping of the booted feet, and someone clattered down the companion ladder.

" Dixon, you swine ! Ahoy, Dixon ! Where are you, you dog ! Burn my soul, but I'll cut yer heart out ! " and a string of vile oaths.

It was Silvera. I made no answer. He groped about in the darkness until he came to my door. He tried the handle. Finding it locked, he roared :

" Open th' door, you —— ! You've spiked me, but by —— I'll spike you ! Open ! "

Receiving no answer, he hammered on the panels with his fists, snarling like a dog and swearing dreadfully. The vessel shuddered to the shocks of the waves breaking over her. Then came a resounding crash on the deck above, with a splintering and tearing of woodwork ; and a roaring welter of sea came like a cataract into the cabin. The water was spurting into my room through the cracks in the door. I expected that the end was coming. Silvera was still in the cabin, but he had desisted from his endeavour to force an entrance to my room. I expect he thought I was dead.

The water was swashing over my body with every pound of the vessel, when she suddenly

canted to starboard and I was thrown violently against the bulkhead. As my room was to port the water drained out, and I found myself lying on the wet planking and still very much alive. Instead of wishing to die, a desire to live was beginning to take possession of me, and I rose to my feet.

The vessel was not pounding now, and though she trembled to the shocks of the seas which broke over her hull, yet it seemed to me she was far from breaking up. The massive oak beams and stanchions in my berth were still holding in spite of the awful hammering the barque had undergone, and I noticed that the oak hanging-knees had not started, nor had the planking opened up. I could not see through the port, owing to the fact that the dead-lights had been shipped over them when we passed the Rio Plata in readiness for the stormy weather of the Horn.

The shocks were perceptibly lessening, and as I puzzled myself for an explanation, I remembered the tide.

“Why, to be sure, the tide is falling, and we must have canted over with our decks toward the shore.” Thus thinking, I struck a match and lit a candle.

Quietly unlocking my door I peered out. The lee side of the cabin was swashing with water and littered with the *débris* of table and seats. A great gap where the skylight had been yawned overhead, and across the square of grey daylight which showed came streams of chilly spray. The candle was blown out, but there was enough light to discern things by. As I glanced around the flooded apartment I could see no sign of Silvera.

"Must have gone on deck," I murmured and scrambling across the sloping floor I crawled up the companionway and looked around on the ruin I had wrought. It was blowing very hard and the spindrift from the welter of whitewater we were lying in was flying athwart the air. Ahead towered a great wall of cliff which loomed hazily in the half light of the semi-antarctic morning, and was blotted from sight intermittently by veils of rainy mist.

The vessel was lying over on her starboard bilge with her bottom facing seaward. All the masts had gone by the board and could be seen in a tangled raffle of spars, canvas, and cordage, swashing among the rocks at the foot of the cliffs. The for'ard house was still standing, and I made out something which had been a mystery to me. The tank which had once reposed on top of the house had disappeared and in its stead I saw the shining barrel of a cannon, known as a Parrott rifle-gun!

As my eyes got used to the gloom, I saw that we were lying in a slight indentation in the cliff wall—a sort of cove or fiord with a litter of broken rocks and boulders rising in a steep pile to the apex of a triangle formed by two unbroken walls of stone. By crawling for'ard and clambering out on the bowsprit, it would be possible to drop on to dry land. And with the craving for life still strong within me, I jumped below to ransack the pantry for food and water. The storeroom lay to starboard, and to reach it I had to wade waist deep in chilly water.

Entering, I stuffed my pockets and the inside of my shirt with biscuits and some dried apples. There was no water in the place, and trusting to

find some when I reached the shore, I crawled along the weather rail to the fo'c'sle head and out on the bowsprit. The headstays were dangling down from the spar, and I was soon slipping and sprawling around on the weed and kelp covered rocks.

Before I gained high-water mark, I was destined to stumble over three almost unrecognizable bodies, but the sight excited no qualms of conscience. They deserved their fate, and though I had the blood of some thirty-three men on my head, I felt that I had become but an instrument of vengeance in the hands of a just Deity.

Heedless of the cold, I scrambled up the slippery boulders to the apex of the cleft. It was with some satisfaction that I noted that the cliffs were not so inaccessible as they appeared from seaward. There were numerous ledges and cracks which would not make climbing difficult to a sailorman used to scaling giddy heights.

I was tightening my belt and buttoning up my coat in preparation to make the ascent, when I heard the rattle of boulders behind me, and I wheeled around in time to see Silvera in the act of hurling a mighty rock in my direction. With a smothered oath, he hove the stone, and I leaped aside in time to escape being dashed to the ground.

I had no weapons, and I was no match for Silvera in strength. But I could see by the terrible look in his eyes that he meant to kill me, and so as he rushed toward me with his great hands outstretched to grasp my throat, I picked up a small stone and struck him square in the face with it. He stopped and clapped his hands to his mouth. While I backed away, he grabbed another piece

of jagged rock and advanced with the blood streaming from his nose and his tangled beard streaked white with crusted salt.

“I’ll fix you, my bully!” he roared. “You think you’ve finished my hash——”

I leaped behind a huge sea-bleached stone just as he hurled his missile, and while he stopped to pick up another, I pelted him with all my strength with another small piece of rock. It struck him on the cheek, cutting it to the bone, and while I grabbed two more, he drove a chunk smack into my ribs with terrific force. I gasped and hurled both missiles at him. One missed, but the other bowled him over. Following up my advantage, I grasped a large stone and launched it at his head. It struck him square in the middle of the back as he rolled over, and he collapsed with a growl of rage.

Several times he attempted to rise to his feet, but somehow or other he was powerless. While I waited with another stone poised to brain him with as soon as he gained his knees, he gave an agonized cry, more like that of a wild beast than of a human being, and shrieked:

“Kill me! Kill me! My back is broken!”

And as I watched him grovelling on the pebbles and clawing out with his hands in a vain effort to rise, I saw that this evidently was the case. My missile had caught him in the small of the back just as he was jumping to his feet, and the blow had broken his spine.

I stepped up to him, still holding on to my stone. He snarled at me like a trapped wolf. His face dripped blood, and with his matted hair, tangled beard, and the eyes literally ablaze with hate and savage defiance, he made a frightful picture as he

lay on the gravel with his fingers tearing into the pebbles in his helpless rage.

"Captain Silvera!" I said calmly. "You and I are quits now. You've got to make your peace with God for you're going to die——"

"Die be damned!" he snarled as he writhed on the beach. "I'll get you first—you clumsy botch. I sh'd ha' checked your navigatin' and trusted you less."

I smiled. "Yes, you should have. I piled her up nicely. Fixed your compass; told you to crack on, and there's the result." And I pointed to the hulk lying a cable's length below in the spume and froth of the breakers of that dismal forbidding coast.

He stared at me incredulously. It was evident that he had imagined the wreck to have been caused by carelessness on my part and the admission of my duplicity seemed to shock him.

"What made you do that?" he said after a pause, a little more calmly. "I always treated you well."

"Yes," I replied, "and I was to navigate the barque to Hiva Nuku and then you'd toss me to the sharks. It was my skill as a navigator which saved me, that's all. You'd have hove me over the side off Nantucket Shoals if Joe Smith hadn't told you I had been an officer. I owe you nothing."

He remained quiet for a spell and the savage light died out of his eyes.

"What do you know?" he inquired at length.

"I know that you and your crew were nothing more than pirates pretending to be whalers," I answered. "I know that you looted and sank two ships, murdering their crews. I wasn't drugged

the time the *Sea King* was looted. I did not drink the water until after the crime was committed."

He nodded.

"D'ye think I'll die?"

"You'll die ultimately," I replied without emotion. "We may both die, but you'll die first. A broken back won't kill you right away, but starvation will get you very soon."

And as I shot a glance behind me, I saw the tide was on the turn.

"I'll have to leave you," I said. "Will I haul you up the beach?"

"No!" he growled. "Let me be."

"Will you have a biscuit?"

"No! Save it for yourself; you'll need it soon enough."

I was about to say good-bye to him when he spoke.

"Wait a spell, Dixon. I'm goin' t' slip my shackle soon, but I might as well give you a true bill. Stand by for a minute or so, an' I'll get all hands into the tar-pot. Will ye hear me?"

I nodded and sat down on a boulder alongside him. It was raining and bitterly cold. The wind was howling in the fissures; slaty storm-racked sky, grey sea, and grey cliffs fringed with roaring breakers made up a melancholy vista of desolation and misery. Add to the picture of dreary land and sea the battered hulk in the surf, the scattered bodies, the two living creatures—one helpless and doomed already and the other with but a doubtful span of life before him—and the weird and mournful squawk of the penguins in the fissures, and you have an idea of the depressive background in which I listened to Silvera's confession.

X—SILVERA UNBOSOMS HIMSELF

“If you get clear, Dixon, I’ll have you make a report on what I’m going to say. Go to th’ nearest Yankee Consul an’ tell him th’ whole yarn. I’ll bet it’ll raise his hair some. Now if you’ll listen I’ll spin you th’ story.

“I’ve been most kinds of a sailor in my day—privateerin’, slavin’, an’ running th’ slave embargo. Then I went my last two or three voyages whalin’ as boat-steerer an’ harpooner. In ’61, me and our cooper, a man called Jake Thompson, jumped the ship in New Zealand an’ sundowned it for the Otago gold diggin’s. We struck it rich, sold out for fifty thousand dollars apiece, and went to San Francisco with our pile.

“Thompson started a kind of tradin’ venture among the Islands and I came East an’ did some gun-runnin’ in a schooner ’round th’ Gulf ports. I lost a good deal o’ my dollars at that game an’ lost th’ schooner as well, so I went West again and found Thompson in ’Frisco doin’ a roarin’ business with his tradin’ company. Then I broached my scheme to him.

“They were makin’ big strikes in th’ Bendigo an’ Ballarat gold fields of Australia, an’ miners were comin’ over to ’Frisco with stories of th’ gold that was bein’ shipped out o’ th’ country in th’ clippers ’round th’ Horn. This give me an idea, an’ I reckoned if a man had a fast sailin’ packet an’ a crew he could rely on there wouldn’t be much difficulty in piratin’ a few o’ them gold ships.

“We talked the thing over an’ we decided that

th' best kind o' craft to use for th' business would be a whaler. Whaleships have a kind o' rovin' commission; they kin go anywhere an' cruise aroun' without causin' suspicion. Ye kin carry a pile o' boats an' keep steady masthead lookouts, an' your papers allow you to enter any port.

"Havin' both been whalemén, we decided that a whaler would be th' best kind o' craft to use. A schooner would be too small an' liable to be overhauled by th' first gunboat what seen her cruisin' around, an' a marchant vessel would be more suspicious than anythin', so th' whaler was th' best lay.

"Now, as it wasn't any easy job pickin' out th' craft what carried th' dust, we had t' figure out some plan for knowin' likely vessels, as I didn't calculate on stoppin' an' overhaulin' every Australian we met. You must remember that every ship we stopped would have to be got rid of, or they'd be for reportin' our actions to th' first cruiser they met, an' we'd be done for. So, rememberin' this, we picked up four likely fellows an' let them into our plans, and we fixed things up in this way.

"I was to go East an' buy an' fit out a likely craft for a whalin' voyage. Thompson supplied th' rhino for th' scheme. Th' four men who were in th' game with us were to make for Melbun an' hang aroun' there until they heard of a ship leavin' for England with a consignment o' gold, an' they were to sign on as foremast hands aboard of her. We reckoned that two packets with a bunch o' homeward-bound miners an' their dust would about do us. Th' two men who signed on in each ship were to get into each watch, port an'

starboard, so's to be able to keep an eye open for us all th' time.

"Sailormen were scarce enough in Melbun with th' crews cuttin' stick for th' diggin's, an' we knew they'd have no trouble in shippin' themselves. We were to be cruisin' about in th' homeward track jest west o' th' Cape Verde Islands, an' they'd arrange to signal us in some way or other. We fixed things pretty well an' there wasn't so much chance o' mistakes as you'd maybe think.

"I came East by the Overland Trail, an' picked up the *Arcturus* in Savannah very cheap, an' scrapin' up a crew I had her brought to Noo Bedford an' altered for whalin'. Then I got a Parrott rifle-gun an' fixed boards over it to make it look like a tank or bos'un's locker——"

"How did you allay suspicions around New Bedford when you fetched that gun aboard?"

"No suspicions at all. A lot o' whaleships carried cannon for protection against pirates in the Eastern channels an' nobody thought anythin' about it. I sounded my crowd what I had scraped together an' made sure they'd be ready for anythin'.

"Then I picked up a feller named Lamson for first mate an' navigator. I was no navigator myself, an' for th' business we needed a good man. This Lamson was a clever joker, but when I broached my plans, he tried to escape while we were anchored out in th' Bay, an' I brained him with a handspike——"

"I thought you said he was drunk and fell down the companionway?"

"Aye, I told you that; but I told you a lot o' things. No, he wasn't drunk, but I hit him too hard an' he croaked. I had to get away to sea

after that, as th' feller belonged to Noo Bedford an' I was afraid some of his friends might be comin' out to visit him afore we sailed. I got outside an' cruised around intendin' for to send a boat in to shore next mornin' to get hold of another mate, an' while I was standin' off an' on, your ship 'most cut us down an' you fell aboard. Lucky for both of us. You were jest th' man I needed; ef you weren't, I'd have had you over th' side long afore now. I reckon you know th' rest o' th' yarn pretty well——"

"Tell me!" I interrupted. "What were you going to do if the vessels had passed you in the night?"

He smiled contemptuously.

"I arranged for that. All th' time we were on th' cruisin' ground I had a red an' white lantern hangin' under th' bowsprit, an' every vessel we saw, we gave chase to. We only saw two craft at night, anyhow."

I nodded.

"Finish your story."

"Waal, there ain't much more. We picked up the *Albemarle* an' got th' signal from our fellows aboard. Then I hocused you out o' the way, an' looted her, an' sent her to th' bottom. We got 'most two hundred an' fifty thousand pounds o' dust an' raw gold out o' her. You knew nawthin' about that.

"Then we picked up the other fellow on th' *Sea King*—his partner was killed off the Horn—an' you say you saw that bit o' work. We got a big pile out o' her—'most as much as the other. That's about all, I reckon, 'cept that we were to lie in to Hiva Nuku until a schooner arrived an' took

th' stuff to 'Frisco. We were to follow later an' divide up on th' spoil——”

“The crew as well?”

He gave a wry smile.

“Some o' them only. I would lose a few between the Islands an' th' Golden Gate. Sickness, y'know, forces me to give up th' v'y'ge.”

I looked down on him with abhorrence.

“You're a pretty dirty scoundrel,” I said. “But I thank the Lord I've fetched you and your gang up all standing. I've been a fool, but I wasn't so foolish as you thought I was, and two can play at a game of bluff. However, it's all finished now and I wish you no harm. Pray, if you know how, for I've got to be moving.”

He laughed harshly.

“Pray! Huh! I'm no crawler! If there's such a place as hell, then I'm bound for it, an' there'll be plenty to hail me when I get there, but we'll all go th' same road. Remember Jake Thompson, San Francisco. Ef you get clear, go to a Consul an' swear to what I've told you. I want him to swing. Will you do what I say?”

“If I get clear, I will!”

I was rising to move away, when he cried appealingly:

“Say, Dixon, I'm a goner, I know, but don't leave me to starve. I'll jest ask you one thing an' I hope ye'll do it. Knock my brains out an' put me out o' misery——”

“No, no no!” I cried, shuddering with the hideousness of the suggestion.

“Then strangle me! Kill me in some way! God, man, don't leave me here to perish alone!”

Sick with cold and the horror of the things I

had seen and heard, I staggered up against the rock wall with his entreaties ringing in my ears.

"Come on, Dixon, like a good fellow! Fix me somehow, but don't leave me, for God's sake. Heave me in th' surf! Drownin's easy."

I steeled my nerves and rushed toward him.

"God forgive me!" I murmured and I dragged and lugged him down to the edge of the advancing breakers.

"Out to th' ledge there an' topple me in!" he commanded.

Obedying his commands, I pulled him over the kelp-covered rocks to the edge of the ledge. Then for a moment my resolution wavered.

"Over with me, man!" he roared. "Over with me! It will be a mercy!"

I stood back in terror.

"I can't! I can't!" I wailed.

His hands clawed at the weeds and he dragged himself to the brink.

"So long!" he shouted, and as I stared at him in paralysed fright, he rolled into the churning sea.

XI—I CHANGE MY VOCATION

How I scaled the cliffs I do not know, but when I came to my natural mind again I was stumbling through the tussock grass and causing an uproar among the penguins, boobies, and other sea fowl nesting in the coarse vegetation. I wandered around for many hours until I stumbled upon a rude hut constructed out of wreckage and sail cloth. Here I lived for days, subsisting upon raw eggs and the biscuits I had brought with me, until I was picked up by a small Falkland Islands

schooner beach-coming around the coast for wreckage.

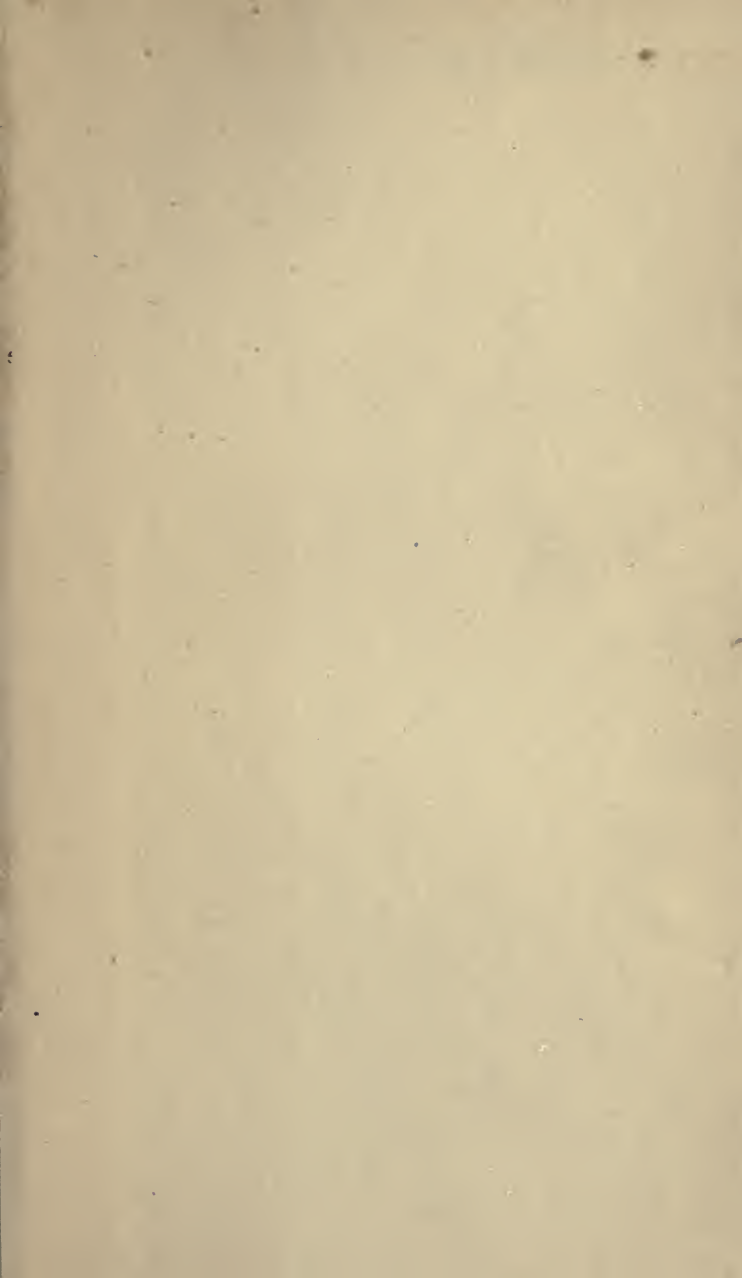
I told them of the wrecked whaler, but nothing of the gold in her lazaret nor the circumstances which led to my being cast ashore on Staten Island. They cruised in the direction of the place where she was lying, but not a vestige of her fabric remained, though pieces of her hull and spars were seen in the clefts and ledges.

After being landed at Port Stanley I made my way over to Montevideo and reported the affair to the United States Consul. That gentleman promptly had me arrested and confined as a lunatic. I was released and went to Buenos Ayres, and the Consuls, both British and American, listened to my tale with incredulous wonder, and quickly had me thrown out into the street. Not a soul would believe me, and the newspapers published an account of a crazy sailor whose mind had been upset by reading of the disappearance of two homeward-bound Australian clippers.

Eventually I joined a ship bound for 'Frisco. Upon arrival I saw the authorities and told them of the connection of one Jake Thompson with the affair. Thompson's trading company had gone out of business a few months before and Thompson himself was no longer in the city. I was laughed at and discredited wherever I went; the affair was a standing joke in the newspapers for many weeks. They willingly believed that I was one of the *Arcturus's* crew. They believed the peculiar manner in which I had come to be aboard of her. But the rest of my tale was put down to a disorder of the brain induced by the hardships I had undergone.

Rebuffed, laughed, and jeered at on every hand, I soon came to the conclusion that the less I said about the events the better for me and my future prospects. I left the city and went inland gold prospecting, with a determination never to go seafaring again. I kept my word, and the foregoing account, written some forty years after the affair happened, is the only statement I have made since I shook the dust of 'Frisco from my feet.

I am a very old man now, but the Lord has kept my memory green, and though I often desire to forget, nevertheless the horror of those far-off days is still in my mind.



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